



The River School Community Handbook

January 23, 2026

This Handbook is not contractually binding. The River School reserves the right to amend or make changes to the rules and policies contained in this Handbook without challenge.

The River School Mission Statement

The River School inspires each child to find their voice.

The River School Pillars

Personalized and Innovative Education

The River School's inclusive model supports the growth of children with and without hearing loss in a dynamic learning environment. We rely on research-based teaching strategies and curricula, transitioning from a play-based, thematic approach to immersive, project-based learning. Through conversation, curiosity, experimentation, and problem-solving, we inspire children to explore, engage and think critically. With small class sizes and low student-teacher ratios, we personalize education to meet each child's unique needs, fostering academic achievement, resilience and empathy.

Highly Engaged Educators, Experts and Professionals

The River School gives each child personalized support for language, literacy and social-emotional development through our co-teaching model that pairs a master's level educator with a speech-language pathologist in every classroom. Educators draw from the best current research in education, which includes River's own nationally recognized and peer-reviewed studies. A multi-disciplinary team of experts, specialists in arts and sciences and graduate interns work with our educators to provide an elevated education experience.

A Community Grounded in Inclusion

The River School is committed to fostering diversity, equity and inclusion. Staying true to our roots, we cultivate a supportive community through tuition assistance and programs that champion social justice. We help children develop enriched perspectives and prepare them to thrive in our ever-changing society.

The River School Community Handbook

ACCREDITATION AND MEMBERSHIP

The River School is accredited by and a member of the Association of Independent Maryland & DC Schools (AIMS). The school is a member of The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), National Business Officers Association (NBOA), Association of Independent Schools of Greater Washington (AISGW), Progressive Education Network, Capital Area Progressive Schools (CAPS), and Palisades Citizens Association (PCA).

ADVANCEMENT OFFICE

The Advancement Office leads fundraising, grants, special events and alumni relations. Philanthropy is essential to sustaining the school's programs, and every family plays an important role in this support.

River's annual giving campaign, known as "The River Fund", is the foundation of philanthropy at The River School. The River Fund provides resources for programs, faculty and students above what is covered by tuition. The Fund is critical to enhancing the student experience at River, ensuring students have access to a well-rounded and enriching learning experience.

In addition, families and friends support River through the annual Scholarship Auction, gifts that secure the school's future, and planned gifts that leave a lasting legacy. The River School is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization incorporated in the District of Columbia, and gifts are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Please contact [Erin Royer Shetter](#), Director of Philanthropy, to learn more.

AIMS PARENTS AND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS STATEMENT

The Association of Independent Maryland & DC Schools (AIMS) publishes advisory statements that articulate commonly-held beliefs among AIMS-member schools. The [AIMS Parents and Independent Schools Statement](#) says that to be successful, an independent school needs and expects the cooperation of its parents, who must understand and embrace the school's mission, share its core values, and fully support its curriculum, faculty, and staff. When joined by a common set of beliefs and purposes, the independent school and its parents form a powerful team with far-reaching positive effects on children and the entire school community.

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

Carpool Line

- Pull in line in front of the building as far as possible without blocking the crosswalk or bus stop. Use hazard lights to indicate that you are part of a carpool.
- A River staff member will come to your car to escort your child inside in the morning, or secure them in their car seat at dismissal.
- For morning and afternoon carpools: Put name cards distributed to every family during Home Visits or the first days of school on the passenger side of your dashboard during morning and afternoon carpools to help with the traffic flow and expedite the process.

- Position the name card so that River's carpool staff can read it easily.
- Please do not form a line prior to 11:45 am or 2:45 pm.
- Do not block streets or driveways.
- Children should remain buckled until the car has come to a complete stop and a teacher has opened the car door to help your child exit. It's preferable to have car seats placed behind the passenger seat (curbside).
- We know the smaller children especially may need a little time to adjust to this new morning routine. It will help them, and the carpool staff, if you offer them verbal assurance and a swift good-bye. River faculty and staff will be sure to comfort anyone in need.

Arrival & Dismissal

Morning Drop-Off:

- Arrival time for Preschool-Grade 3 begins at 8:20 am.
- Arrival time for Upper Elementary students at V Street location: 8:15 am - 8:30 am.
- Arrival time for families who've contracted for Before Care for the school year: 8:00 am
- Elementary (K-Grade 3) students should be settled in their classrooms by 8:30 am to start their morning activities.
- For Preschool children, arriving by 8:30 am allows for more Choice Time exploration and fun.

Late Arrival for Preschool - Grade 3: after 8:45 am. For those arriving after 8:45 am, please park in a valid parking space and walk your child to the Lobby. Bob Jones will arrange to have them escorted to class by a staff/faculty member.

Late Arrival for Upper Elementary: after 8:30 am. For those arriving after 8:30 am, please park in a valid parking space and walk your child to the Lobby. Bob Jones will arrange to have them escorted to class by a staff/faculty member.

Noon Dismissal: 11:45 am - 12:15 pm

Full-Day Dismissal: 2:45 pm - 3:15 pm

Upper Elementary Dismissal:

- If your child is not participating in UE@3, pick-up is 3:00 pm - 3:15 pm from V Street.
- If your child is participating in UE@3, pick-up is 4:15 pm - 5:00 pm from the main campus.
- If your child is signed up for the Extended Wind Down Zone (post UE@3 activities), pick-up is 5:00 pm - 6:00 pm from the main campus.

Late Pick-Up: after 12:15 pm for morning programs; after 3:15 pm for full-day programs. Children benefit from the security that comes with timely pick-ups, and our teachers need time after school for planning and preparing for the next day.

Late pick-ups are for emergencies only; we understand that things come up, however. Please call Bob Jones at 202-337-3554 to let us know if you're running late. Park in a valid parking spot and come to the Lobby for your child.

Fees will be assessed for repeated late pick-ups: \$15.00 + \$1.00 for every minute after 3:15 pm. This fee applies to individual therapy appointments as well.

School Wide Noon Dismissal Procedures

- If you have a child in **Preschool**, please plan to pick them (and any older River siblings) between 11:45 am - Noon.
- If you have a child in **PreK through Grade 3** (with no younger River siblings), please plan to pick them up between Noon - 12:15 pm.
- **Grade 4 and Grade 5** will dismiss Noon - 12:15 pm at the V Street location, the same way as the normal Upper Elementary full-day dismissal.

Car Seats

In the District of Columbia, car seats are required for children under eight years of age or less than 80 pounds, and children under 12 years old must be in the rear of the vehicle. We comply with this law and will not release a child without an appropriate car seat; this policy applies to children going home with other families.

School personnel are trained to properly buckle children into car seats on the curbside of the street. Car seats on the right (curbside) of the vehicle facilitate safe loading and unloading of children and an efficient carpool.

ATTENDANCE

The school considers punctuality and regular attendance essential to the success of your child's school experience. Any child in Preschool - Grade 3 arriving after 8:45 am is marked tardy; for Upper Elementary students it is 8:30 am. Tardies are recorded on narrative reports. Punctuality and attendance are especially important for the Elementary and Upper Elementary Programs where school attendance is monitored and reported to DC.

ATTIRE

School is a time for active and creative play. Children should be dressed in comfortable and washable play clothes that allow them to move freely and get dirty. Under shorts (i.e., cartwheel shorts, athletic shorts) are recommended for wearing underneath dresses to help maintain privacy. Shoes should be of sturdy construction with non-slip soles, made for running and climbing on playground equipment. Shoes with wheels are not permitted. Flip flops, Crocs and clogs are unsafe for active play and are strongly discouraged. Please don't send children into the building with umbrellas.

AUDIOLOGY

Our Audiology Department provides services to the greater community including hearing screenings, custom-fitted ear/swim plugs, etc. To learn more about these services [contact Becky Warischalk, River REACH director](#).

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

The **Before Care Program** provides supervised childcare from 8:00 am until morning classes begin at 8:20 am. It is offered on a full-year contract basis only. The **After Care Program** provides supervised activities from 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm daily for children in the full-day program. It is offered on a full-year contract basis only.

For more information, [contact Jessica McWilliams](#) in the Business Office, 202-380-9246.

BEHAVIOR

The River School strives to achieve a culture of respect and safety where students can learn their best. River School teachers are skilled in using positive behavioral management techniques in the classroom. If a child's behavior affects their own safety or the safety of others, parents will be notified. If a child strikes another classmate after being given a warning about their behavior, the child will be sent home for the rest of the day.

Because The River School cares deeply about the well-being of our students, not only at school and/or school-sponsored events, but also when they are elsewhere, we seek to partner with parents and guardians. The River School is not an in loco parentis institution like, for example, a boarding school; consequently, we very much rely on parents and guardians to monitor parties and other activities that take place in the home and other venues outside of school, giving attention to the safety of the children in our collective care. We also provide support, education and information around healthy relationships, positive choices and consent to all students at a grade-appropriate level. As a general matter, The River School will not investigate incidents of bullying, harassment or sexual abuse occurring off-campus and outside of school hours unless the school determines, in its discretion, that the incident significantly impacts a student's ability to participate in the school's programs and/or activities, or if the school is required to do so under applicable law.

A positive, collaborative and constructive relationship between the school and parents/guardians or other individuals interacting with the school and/or school community by virtue of their relationship with the student is essential to the mission of the school.

Thus, if the behavior, communication or interaction on campus, off campus (including during school-sponsored events), or via digital or electronic means (including, but not limited to, listservs or online forums) of parents or other individuals interacting with the school and/or school community by virtue of their relationship with the student (i.e., "affiliated individuals") is disruptive, intimidating, overly aggressive, or reflects a loss of confidence or serious disagreement with the The River School, including but not limited to disagreement with the school's decisions, strategies, policies, procedures, responsibilities, delivery of the program, strategic initiatives, personnel, leadership or standards; or imperils accomplishment of its educational purpose or program, threatens the health safety or well-being of another member of the school community; or inconsistent with commitments shared by members of the community, River School parents understand and agree that the school has the right to dismiss the student from the school, the school property, a school event, or other such restriction or action as determined in the school's sole discretion. In addition, parents understand and agree that the school has the right to place restrictions on affiliated individuals' involvement with or activity at the school, on school property, or at school-related events, if such parents/individuals engage in behavior that the school determines in its sole discretion to warrant such a restriction.

BIRTHDAYS

If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday at school, you may send a small treat to share in the classroom. A healthy snack or mini-cupcakes are encouraged rather than full-sized

cupcakes or cakes. Non-food alternatives could include an art activity or small party favor. Please arrange in advance with the teachers and ask about class specific allergies/food restrictions. Please do not send anything in with peanuts or nuts.

For birthday parties outside of school, we ask that you approach them with sensitivity and inclusion in mind. It's best to include the entire class or only a few classmates. No single child should be excluded.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

At The River School, decision-making authority at the highest level resides in a volunteer Board of Trustees. The Board focuses on three areas critical to the success of any independent school. The Board selects, evaluates and supports the Head of School, to whom it delegates authority to manage the school; develops broad institutional policies that guide the Head of School; and is accountable for the school's financial well-being. The Board of Trustees does not manage school operations. In the conduct of its official business, the Board acts as a whole. Individual Trustees, including the Board Chair, have no authority to act unless specifically authorized to do so by the Board acting as a whole.

BUSINESS OFFICE

The Business Office manages financial transactions, enrollment contracts, tuition payments and financial aid applications. If you have questions related to financial matters, contact [Rob Kuklewicz](#) or [Jessica McWilliams](#).

CANCELLATION, DELAYED OPENING & EARLY CLOSING

The River School makes closing/delay decisions independent of the District of Columbia Public School System. The decision to close or delay will typically be made by 6:15 am. To learn about a River School closing or delay:

- Check your mobile device for a message sent by SMS
- Listen to WTOP Radio stations: 103.5 FM, 103.9 FM, 107.7 FM
- Check [the WTOP website](#)
- Call The River School at 202.337.3554 for a recorded message
- Check [The River School's website](#)
- Check [The River School's Facebook page](#)
- Check your email for a message sent by the school

As weather and subsequent road conditions can vary greatly for families based on geographic location, parents are asked to use their best judgment in determining whether it is safe to transport children, regardless of the school's decision.

One Hour Delayed Opening

Morning drop-off begins at 9:20 am and classes begin at 9:45 am.

Two Hour Delayed Opening

Morning drop-off begins at 10:20 am and classes begin at 10:45 am.

Early Closing

If it becomes necessary to close school early, we will notify parents via email and the SMS texting system. Parents (or their emergency designees) are expected to pick up their children by the announced closing time. Regardless of the school's decision, during times of inclement weather, parents are asked to use their best judgment in determining whether it is safe to transport children.

CARPOOLING

Written parental permission is required for anyone not on the authorized pickup list. You must email your child's teachers and [Bob Jones](#) to ensure your message is received. If interested in carpooling with other families, [contact Megan Campbell](#) to include your information in the school's weekly *Currents* newsletter.

CLASS & PARENT FUNDRAISING/SOLICITING

Fundraising connected to service-learning, community service projects or other school-related projects must be coordinated by faculty and approved by the Administrative Team in advance. Individual student or parent fundraising or solicitation for outside causes or businesses is not permitted at school or through the use of contact information in the School Directory.

COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLICATIONS

The River School uses electronic communication, printed materials, signage and social media to keep the school community informed about news and events including the following:

- [School Website](#)
- Facebook, Instagram
- *Currents* Newsletter sent via email weekly (Mondays, 5:00 pm)
- **Community Handbook and Family Directory:** Online in the [Parent Portal](#). Printed versions available upon request.
- **Teacher Communications:** Emails, class newsletters, Preschool Daily Notes, Seesaw
- **Annual Report:** Report of philanthropy at River and school finances

COMMUNICATION FROM PARENTS TO THE SCHOOL

Short, informal notes and emails facilitate communication between school and home and effectively share relevant family news or information about progress.

The school telephone is answered between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm. During school hours, teachers are with children and cannot take calls from parents. Should you wish to leave a phone message, all classrooms have voicemail. If you have an important message to relay to the teachers, contact [Bob Jones](#), and he can deliver the message. The teachers typically respond within 24 hours.

If you are concerned about your child and/or the program, contact your child's teachers. If your concerns require further attention, contact: [Emmie Parr](#), Director of Teacher Support; [Robin Goffen](#), Director of Speech and Language Services; or [Becky Warischalk](#), Director of Student Support and River REACH Coordinator.

COUNSELING CONFIDENTIALITY

The River School prioritizes the developmental needs of the children we serve at our school. Working closely with our faculty and staff, we partner with parents in the delivery of our educational and co-curricular programs. The partnership between parents and the school involves trust and a free flow of communication between parents/guardians and the school, as this is essential to ensure that both are aware of the significant events and issues that impact a student's life.

In keeping with this partnership, there are limits to the confidential nature of students' relationships with River's psychologists, i.e., those serving in a counseling capacity. When possible, these counselors will notify students of the limitations of their confidentiality obligations at the beginning of each meeting. Similarly, the counselors may first encourage a student to

Speak with their parents/guardians on their own or together with the counselor, depending on the urgency of the matter and the best interest of the student. The River School counselors may notify a student's parents/guardians without the consent of the student or over the student's objections if the student is in imminent danger of harming themselves or others, or for other compelling reasons, in the counselor's professional judgment.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The River School was founded on the belief that inclusion is essential and the best practice of early childhood education. We are a thriving, diverse community of learners in which human differences are respected, explored, and celebrated as vital reflections of the larger society and world. We embrace human diversity as a rich, living educational resource and believe multiculturalism to be relevant and mutually beneficial. How we think about a child's capacity affects that child's performance, and we believe in and are committed to high standards for all children. Our diversity includes individuals with hearing loss and the broad range of human variability, including dimensions of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender and gender expression, and socioeconomic status. Diversity is an ongoing process by which a school expresses its commitment to bring different peoples and perspectives into its community, curriculum and culture. We work to create a sense of connectedness so that our members feel safe to explore and challenge dynamic, multifaceted differences in open inquiry. We understand that such a community is crucial for our students' future successful participation in the wider world. With this understanding, we engage in diversity, equity and inclusion work to nurture our understanding of others and ourselves.

ELEVATOR

Children are only permitted to ride the elevator when accompanied by an adult.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT/SAFETY/SECURITY

We take the safety of children, faculty, staff and visitors seriously and work closely with police, fire and emergency personnel to ensure a safe school community. Our Emergency and Crisis Plan and Team has been approved by security consultants and through Accreditation. Faculty and staff are trained annually in emergency, health and safety procedures including CPR, First Aid and AED.

The River School employs a full-time security officer who is on-site from 8:00 am - 6:00 pm Monday - Friday (when School is in session) and during the summer weeks of Camp River. Additionally, The River School hires a retired DC police officer to assist with morning and afternoon carpools. All external doors are kept locked. To enter the school, school personnel use a code that is changed frequently. Visitors enter through the Lobby and must check in at the front desk. Live footage from video cameras enables us to monitor external doors at all times.

In an emergency, teachers carry red backpacks with contact information for families, a first aid kit, students' emergency medications if applicable, and a cell phone to aid with communication. Portable two-way radios are also used.

We are prepared for an incident that would require us to shelter in place in our first-floor Gym. We store an adequate amount of water, food, medical kits, and other supplies for such a situation.

If an unsafe person should enter the school building, an announcement will be broadcast over the intercom. Everyone will exit the building as quickly and safely as possible and relocate to a secure location nearby. During emergency situations, we will communicate with families as we are able, with a priority on texts to mobile devices.

Our plan includes procedures to evacuate the building if it is deemed unsafe. In the event of an

emergency closure due to any reason, The River School employees and students will evacuate to the St. Patrick's Episcopal Day School at 4700 Whitehaven Parkway, NW, Washington, DC 20007. We will remain there temporarily until a parent picks up each child or it is safe to return to The River School. We will not provide services for a lengthy period at our emergency contingency site.

ENRICHMENT PROGRAM (RECC)

River Enrichment Clubs & Classes (RECC) Program provides a variety of after-school activities for students in PreK - Grade 3 to gain new skills and delve deeper into their favorite subjects. With different friends and teachers, students can expand their horizons within familiar surroundings. There are fall, winter and spring sessions available for a fee. Contact [Capi Anderson](#) for more information.

ENROLLMENT CONTRACTS

All enrollment contracts are binding as of 4:00 pm, May 1, for the following school year. For rolling admissions, signed enrollment contracts are binding 48 hours from the stated due date.

FACULTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS OR EARLY RELEASE

Professional development time allows faculty and staff to keep current with the latest in education innovation by participating in specialized training.

FAMILY ASSOCIATION OF RIVER (FAR)

All River parents and caregivers are members of the Family Association of River (FAR) and are encouraged to be active and engaged in the life of the school. FAR brings families together and supports the school community in meaningful ways, including:

- Hosts regular meetings for parents/caregivers
- Supports classroom teachers through class volunteers
- Coordinates staff and faculty lunches during Family Conferences and organizing other appreciation efforts
- Organizes and promotes events, activities and volunteering
- Coordinates community service projects
- Supports the Book Fair, Fall Fest, the Scholarship Auction and the Spring Picnic & RiverWalk.

FAR can be contacted at far@riverschool.net

FAMILY CONFERENCES

There are three Family Conferences during the school year. In-person and virtual formats are offered. River offers one conference per student even if parents maintain separate households. These conferences are for collaborative, respectful discussions on students' academic and social-emotional learning goals and progress.

The first conference in the fall is a 20-minute conference about your child's first month at school and the ways in which each child can be challenged and supported. The two subsequent 30/35-minute conferences focus on the child's overall progress. A narrative summary detailing the child's progress is provided to parents before the second and third conferences. Narratives presented to parents are considered final and will **not** be edited to reflect parent preference or feedback.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION IN THE CLASSROOM

Healthy partnerships between home and school enrich the educational experience for children, and parent participation is fundamental to this goal. Teachers may ask parents about their interests, skills and knowledge and suggest ways in which parent participation can enhance the class curriculum. Parents may be invited to read a story, cook a dish, play an instrument or share a particular talent or tradition. Parents may also be able to participate by helping with a class project. Teachers will establish a schedule and guidelines for visits. Typically, siblings do not participate in these classroom events as this is a special time for the child in that class.

FIELD TRIPS

Field Trips are an important aspect of River's thematic curriculum and a fun opportunity for children to explore the greater world around them. We rely on and appreciate parent volunteers to help chaperone and transport the children on these outings. Parents who sign up to be drivers must submit River's Parent/Guardian Driver form through the student's Magnus account, including driver's license information and proof of auto insurance. River uses a third-party driver record check to clear drivers. [Contact Tracy Armstrong](#) to receive the form.

GYM RENTAL

The River School Gym is available to rent for birthday parties, evening pick-up basketball and special celebrations. Mutually agreeable dates can be arranged on weekends and after 6:00 pm during the week. [Email Jessica McWilliams](#) in the Business Office for more information.

HEALTH

Healthy Child Documentation

All students must have a current District of Columbia Universal Health Certificate, including immunization record and proof of annual screening for TB on file. For those under 6 years of age, they must also have documentation of a lead screening.

Students must be current and provide proof of all vaccinations required by the District of Columbia Department of Health to attend The River School. Immunization exemptions are not accepted by The River School.

The River School follows the American Academy of Pediatrics vaccine recommendations, not those of the CDC.

The River School requires students to have completed an **initial** COVID vaccination series and have an **annual** flu shot. There will be no exemptions from this policy.

Given the evolution and steadfastness of COVID, it is *strongly recommended* that students receive updated vaccines as they become available.

Physicals are valid for one calendar year from the date of the exam. When your child has a physical or immunizations, have your physician complete the Health Certificate and upload it to their Magnus Health account as soon as possible.

Children over three years of age must have a completed District of Columbia Oral Health Assessment Form on file. Dental exams are valid for one calendar year from the date of the exam. These forms can be found in the Magnus Health Portal.

If your child is found to be out of compliance with health forms, they will not be able to attend classes until all paperwork has been submitted.

Child Safety and Welfare

The District of Columbia requires school staff to report any observed unexplained injuries of children and any child reports of physical abuse including hitting by parents or other adults to Child Protective Services. The Child and Protective Services policy prohibits the school from notifying the parents when such calls are placed.

Disclosure

All families are asked to inform the school of all issues affecting their child including, but not limited to: learning, psychological, emotional and medical issues; medications; and any other issues that impact the child's well-being. Full disclosure is in the best interest of your child. Information is placed in your child's file and remains strictly confidential.

When Children Become Sick at School or Home

If a child becomes ill at school, parents will be contacted to discuss the condition and determine arrangements for your child. If parents cannot be reached, the emergency designee(s) on file will be contacted. For pick-ups due to illness or injury, please do so within one hour.

Lice

We ask that parents check their children for lice and nits on a regular basis. If you find lice or nits, please let [Nurse Elizabeth McDermott](#) know so that she can advise you regarding treatment. If your child is found to have live lice at school, you will be notified and required to treat your child before they return the following day.

Administration of Medication at School

Students are not permitted to carry or self administer medications. Medications are administered by our nurse or her designee on a limited basis. When possible, please schedule medication doses for outside of school hours. If your child requires emergency medication (epinephrine, a rescue inhaler, etc.), a completed emergency action plan must be on file in your child's Magnus Health account. For daily medications or short-term scheduled medications such as antibiotics, please download the DC Medication and Medical Treatment Form from Magnus.

Medication forms and Emergency action plans must be signed by BOTH a parent and the child's physician/NP. All medications sent to school must come directly to the nurse and must be in their original containers with the pharmacy label attached. A limited number of stock medications (Tylenol, Ibuprofen, Bacitracin, etc.) are kept in the health room and can be administered as needed by the nurse. These medications must be signed for in Magnus using the Over-the-Counter Medication Permission Form in your student's Vital Health Record.

HEARING LOSS

The River School model includes children with hearing loss in each of our classrooms, alongside a majority of hearing peers. Research has shown that early language exposure for all children, especially those with hearing loss, leads to better learning outcomes. This is why The River School provides a language rich environment for all children in every classroom. Our curriculum strives to allow children to interact and learn from each other. The speech-language pathologist and educator in the classroom can help facilitate these interactions to promote language development for all children.

At The River School, we use child-first language. We refer to children who use cochlear implants and hearing aids as "children who have hearing loss" because we consider hearing loss as part of a medical diagnosis from our clinical team. How the children refer to themselves can vary (hard of hearing, Deaf, etc.). We strive to provide the children with tools to determine how they identify themselves. We do not use the term "hearing impairment" because it suggests a negative outlook on the child's difference.

In each classroom, there is a Soundfield system. When a teacher uses a microphone, their voice is amplified over other noises in the classroom. These systems are beneficial for all students because they provide better access to the teachers' voices by helping to overcome the effects of distance, noise and reverberation.

HOMEWORK

In Kindergarten - Grade 3, The River School follows the 10-minute per grade guideline, with a strong focus on literacy and project-based learning. We believe all work, including homework, should be purposeful and relevant. Homework should be developmentally appropriate, so any assignments sent home are meant to foster communication and independent thinking. Traditional homework will not be sent home daily, but reading (either with your child or independent reading) is encouraged daily. In Upper Elementary (Grades 4 and 5), assignments focus on developing and reinforcing positive and effective study habits, executive functioning skills, independence and confidence; therefore, homework is never graded, but instead used as an evaluation tool that teachers and students discuss and problem solve as necessary.

IMAGE USE

For the purpose of promoting the school and our programs, and highlighting student and faculty/staff achievements, The River School regularly photographs and films students for use in a variety of communication mediums, including, but not limited to: print and online publications; promotional materials and ads; websites; and select social media. It is the school's policy to never use students' full names in direct association with photos/videos. To deny permission for the school to use photos or videos in materials developed and distributed by The River School, parents/guardians must contact River's [Admission and Enrollment Management](#) office no later than the first day of school.

LOST AND FOUND

The Lost and Found is located in the closet in the Lobby. Please label your child's items so they can be returned easily. At the end of the school year, unclaimed items are donated to a charitable organization.

MAGNUS HEALTH PORTAL

The River School uses an online health management system, Magnus Health SMR (Student Medical Record), for all student medical information and enrollment paperwork. As this is a web-based system, you will have continuous access to your child's health records, as well as the ability to make updates.

Timely submission of health information and other forms is vital so that records can be up-to-date before the first day of school. You will receive weekly reminders as long as there are outstanding items in your account. The data is securely stored and you can update records as needed.

Questions on Magnus?

If you are having difficulty navigating [Magnus](#), entering data online, or downloading the hardcopy cover sheets and forms, or if you have any other questions, please contact [Tracy Armstrong](#) for enrollment forms and [Nurse Elizabeth McDermott](#) for all medical forms. You can also contact [customer support at Magnus Health SMR](#) or call 877.461.6831.

NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY

The River School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religious affiliation, gender, sexuality, ethnic or national origin in the administration of its education policies, admission policies, financial aid programs, and other school-administered programs.

OUTPLACEMENT – ‘NEXTPLACEMENT’

Currently, the school actively helps families with the process of identifying and applying to appropriate placements after Grade 5 (or Grade 6 in the future). The Outplacement Team works carefully with each family to determine the best fit for your child and serves as the liaison between The River School and outside programs.

If you are considering applying to other programs before Grade 5, please consider The River School as an option. [Contact Katie Brebbia](#), Assistant Director of Admission, to set up time with the River team to discuss and receive a tour of our programs. If you are applying to other programs prior to fifth grade, please notify the Admission Office as early as possible to start the process and sign River’s records release authorization form.

PARENT INFANT PROGRAM

This free weekly program, for families and their children with hearing loss from birth to age three, is led by speech-language pathologists and educators, who collaborate with the audiologists and psychologists as needed. Parents are provided with functional tips and hands-on practice in helping their children develop listening and language skills during everyday activities. For more information, contact the [Parent Infant Program](#).

PARTICIPATION IN DAILY ACTIVITIES

Outdoor play is a regularly-scheduled component of the school day and is a requirement of our licensing and accreditation. Even in colder weather, children still spend time outdoors to get fresh air and exercise. Please be sure to dress them appropriately (e.g., jacket, hat, gloves).

POTTY TRAINING

All students who are entering PreKindergarten must be fully potty-trained and wear regular underwear (i.e., no pull-ups), and should be able to use the toilet independently. However, we recognize that accidents may happen, so we ask every student to have an extra set of clothing to keep at school. These items must be labeled with your child's name in a ziplock bag. Should an accident occur, we will send home the soiled items in your child's backpack and we ask that you return a new set the following day.

RE-ENROLLMENT

Re-enrollment contracts for the following school year are sent to families in February. Parents should [notify Rob Kuklewicz](#) in the Business Office in writing if a student is not going to accept the re-enrollment invitation. **All enrollment contracts are binding as of 4:00 pm, May 1** for the following school year.

RESPONSIBLE USE POLICIES FOR UPPER ELEMENTARY

Responsible Technology Use Policy

The use of Internet access and technology at The River School is considered a privilege and responsibility. Students and parents/guardians in the Upper Elementary program must agree to River’s Responsible Technology Use Policy, including the efficient, ethical and legal utilization of the River network and Internet resources. Beginning in Grade 4, students will use River-owned Chromebooks. Students are not permitted to use personal cell phones or devices during school hours for personal communication purposes, unless a River faculty or staff member grants permission. Students who fail to follow the River Responsible Technology Use Policy may lose their access privileges.

Responsible Use of River's Collaborative Maker Studio Policy

In the Upper Elementary program, River's Collaborative Maker Studio will include a variety of tools and materials that facilitate hands-on learning and creation, helping students bring their ideas to fruition when used respectfully and responsibly. It is considered a privilege as well as an integral part of River's Upper Elementary educational program to offer these advanced Maker tools and materials. As a part of their work in the Collaborative Maker Studio, students will be taught how to use and care for a wide range of tools and materials which, if used improperly, could lead to damage and/or injury. These tools include, but are not limited to power tools, hand tools and heated tools. A Responsible Use of River's Collaborative Maker Studio form must be signed by both the student and parent/guardian in order for student participation.

REST TIME

In accordance with the District of Columbia Child Care health regulations, all children who attend school for more than four hours (and who are under six years of age) are required to rest following lunch. The length of rest time varies with the age of the child.

RIVER REACH

River REACH is a fee-for-service program offering individualized educational tutoring and a variety of therapy services. River REACH serves children with learning differences, speech-language delays/disorders and sensorimotor delays. Services are offered to children from infancy to 18 years of age. Clients include River School students, as well as children in the broader community. To learn more about the program, [contact Becky Warischalk](#).

SCHOOL PERSONNEL EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Faculty and staff at The River School are highly trained professionals. In order to maintain a professional environment, faculty and staff cannot be privately employed by River School families in any capacity, including but not limited to babysitting, driving students or house sitting. They cannot attend or host student parties, and will not develop personal relationships with individual parents.

SNACKS, LUNCH & ALLERGIES

Healthy snacks are provided to students. If your child has a food allergy or dietary restriction, please provide a container of alternative snacks. Information about known food allergies should be detailed on school medical and student emergency forms in the Magnus Health Portal. Nurse Elizabeth will relay the information to the appropriate faculty and staff. Full-day students bring lunch daily. Lunches must be ready-to-eat as teachers cannot leave the room to warm food. Our teachers work to instill independence and healthy eating habits for our students.

River Is a Peanut and Nut-Aware School

There are students and school personnel with severe peanut/tree nut allergies. This impacts lunches, cooking projects, parties, special treats/snacks, and items for class/school events. Please do not use peanuts, tree nuts or nut products in any food items sent to school, and ensure store-bought products are peanut and nut-free. Food vendors providing items should be advised of our policy.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Parents are discouraged from "friending" school personnel on social media platforms due to the nature of social media, the inherent conflicts of interest that may arise and/or the potential for the faculty or staff member feeling pressured to accept the request.

SOUND SUPPORT

Sound Support is a group which is dedicated to providing parents of children with hearing loss a safe place to meet others, learn together and share experiences. The group is open to the families of children with hearing loss who attend The River School. For more information, email soundsupport@riverschool.net.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The River School plans a number of special events throughout the school year to build engagement and celebrate the extended community, including:

Class Parties

Families are invited to key school-year events (e.g., Winter Break and end-of-year parties.) Others, including Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, etc. are considered **student-only events** with no parents present. Celebrations of Learning and special holidays that families want to share are organized at the discretion of the teaching team who will seek to minimize disruptions to the class schedule. Please arrange in advance with the teachers and ask about class specific allergies/food restrictions. Please do not send anything in with peanuts or nuts.

Auction

The Scholarship Auction is River's annual fundraiser benefiting scholarship and tuition assistance. The entire school community is encouraged to participate by volunteering, donating or contributing in other ways.

Back to School Night

Held in late September, River's Back to School Night for parents offers an opportunity to mingle with other parents, engage with River administrators and visit their child's classroom for a presentation by the teaching team. The evening starts with a wine & cheese reception, followed by remarks, introductions to the Arts & Sciences faculty and interactive activities. Classroom visits take place afterwards, with two 20-minute sessions for parents with multiple children at River.

Book Fair

A favorite of parents and students alike, each year we host a Book Fair. There will be opportunities to shop and learn about selected books and authors. Proceeds benefit The River School Library.

Community Performances

Parents and guardians are invited for periodic learning celebrations for Arts & Sciences and class-specific performances. Elementary grade-specific plays are part of the Drama program. Parents are encouraged to attend these events.

Fall Fest

The Family Association of River (FAR) weekend event made its debut in November '23 at Glen Echo Park. This school wide get-together features fun kids' activities for all ages, including games and sports, hot cider, arts and crafts, face painting, balloon artistry, and more!

Field Days

These are fun-filled mornings, one for Preschool (5 Full-Day and PreK classes) and one for Elementary/Upper Elementary students, at Palisades Park in late May/early June. Blue and green teams compete in a variety of fun, physically challenging activities that promote good sportsmanship.

Grandparents & Special Friends Day

In the spring, grandparents and special friends of all students are invited to visit the school and spend time in classrooms. The school sends out electronic and printed invitations. *Please note, this event is not intended for parents.*

Halloween Parade

A beloved River tradition, students are invited to dress in costumes (no scary masks or weapons permitted) to march along MacArthur Boulevard for a few blocks on Halloween morning. Parents are invited to join the parade or watch from the route. The children will enjoy classroom celebrations afterwards and then resume with the daily schedule. When selecting a costume for your child, please note that no weapons or masks of any kind are allowed. We also ask that costumes are not scary/violent and do not impede a child's full participation in our school day. Please be aware of the cultural significance of various costumes, ensuring costumes do not trivialize culturally significant traditions.

Spring Picnic & Jill Bailey Chenet's RiverWalk

The Spring Picnic and Jill Bailey Chenet's RiverWalk is a community-wide event held annually on a Sunday in May. We gather for fun activities and a picnic lunch. RiverWalk is named in memory of our beloved teacher and friend who taught her students, and all of us, to love, laugh and celebrate life. Proceeds benefit the Jill Bailey Chenet Scholarship Fund.

SUMMER CAMP

The River School's summer camp, Camp River, is open to children ages 3-10 (rising Preschool through rising 4th Grade), including children from the greater community. Contact [Capi Anderson](#) with questions about Camp River or visit the [Camp River webpage](#).

SUPPORT SERVICES

River faculty has a broad range of expertise across developmental domains; these specialists support classroom teams to ensure a holistic learning experience for all children at River.

Individual support services are provided to our students with hearing loss as a component of their program. If comprehensive assessments or ongoing services are recommended for students without hearing loss, parents will be contacted and referral information provided.

Speech

Our speech-language pathologists provide language, literacy and social communication support in the classroom. Screenings are conducted as needed.

Audiology

All River School students receive free annual hearing screenings, as well as periodic monitoring, as needed.

Educational Psychology

Our psychologists consult with faculty, provide social and behavioral support to children in the classroom and assist with academic assessments.

Occupational Therapy

Our occupational therapist provides fine motor (e.g., handwriting and gross motor support, as well as sensory integration strategies throughout the classrooms. Screenings are conducted as needed.

Developmental Screening and Evaluations

Ongoing evaluation is an integral part of the school curriculum. Formal and informal methods are used to provide modification of goals and teaching strategies and to document progress over time.

TEACHER GIFT POLICY

River School teachers are talented, dedicated professionals, and it is natural that families want to acknowledge them. If you choose to give a gift, special cards and homemade gifts are treasured and appreciated. Please do not give extravagant gifts as this is unnecessary and can make teachers uncomfortable. The school celebrates upcoming life events, such as weddings and births, for school personnel and asks that parents not organize any snack or gift collection in recognition of these types of events. Cards from your children are a nice way to recognize these occasions and life events.

TUITION ASSISTANCE/SCHOLARSHIP

The River School is open to all students who can benefit from its educational program. Although it is not possible to meet all requests for tuition assistance, the school strives to help as many families as possible. Grants are awarded based on financial need which is determined through third-party financial analysis conducted by the Clarity platform. Final decisions are at the discretion of the Tuition Assistance Committee.

Families may apply for tuition assistance online or can request a printed tuition assistance packet. [The River School uses Clarity as our Tuition Assistance application system.](#) Due dates for applications including the access code will be shared in the fall each year. Award notifications are sent with your child's re-enrollment contract.

VOLUNTEERING & PARENT ENGAGEMENT

The strength of River's community stems from the active engagement of parents, grandparents, alumni and alumni families. There are many opportunities for you to become involved including class projects, community service drives, special events, parent education programs, fundraising campaigns, admission ambassador programs and more.

At River, our faculty and administrators view themselves as your partners in parenting. We greatly appreciate this community of learners that values partnership, embraces diversity and invites engagement. Thank you!