

Prestonwood Christian Academy



International Student Program Handbook 2025-2026

Table of Contents

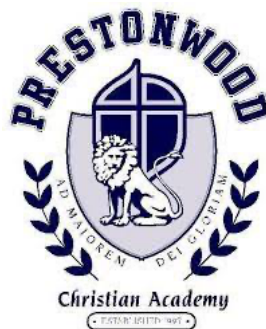
Communication	4
MyPCA	4
Mandatory Activities	4
School/Academic Support	5
Academic Support Class	5
Learning English/English Only	6
English Proficiency Practice Tests	6
Relationships	6
Religious Services	7
Student Place of Residence	7
Health	7
Medical/Insurance	7
Required Immunizations	8
Counseling and Wellness	8
Accident or Illness	8
First Aid	8
Smoking Alcohol and Drug Use	8
School Breaks	9
Beginning of School Year	9
Christmas Break	9
Summer Break	10
Other	10
Visa	10
Termination	10
Miscellaneous	10
Host Family Life	11
International Student Expectations	11
Responsibilities of International Students	11
Conflicts and Resolutions	13
Host Family Assignments	13
Social Media Policy	13
Finances	14
Electronics	14
Transportation	14
Questions	15

Prestonwood Christian Academy (PCA) welcomes you and your family to our school community. The mission of PCA is to equip students to embrace biblical truth, strive for academic excellence, and model Christ-like leadership to influence their homes, churches and communities for Christ. We look forward to your time with us and hope you will have many positive experiences that will create lifelong and happy memories of your time at PCA.

The purpose of this handbook is to assist you as you prepare for your stay and to help you understand what will be expected of you once you are enrolled at PCA. All International parents and students must read and understand all of Prestonwood Christian Academy Student/Parent Handbook. Each year you will be required to sign a handbook agreement form thereby agreeing to the standards and rules in the PCA Parent and Student Handbook and PCA International Student Program (ISP) Handbook. If needed, you should have this document translated.

Parents investing in an international education for their children expect that they will behave well and act in a manner that reflects well on their family and country. It is important that you remember this expectation and honor your parents in doing your very best.

You must carefully read this Handbook and PCA's Student Handbook as they explain the required code of conduct, disciplinary rules, and obligations of a PCA student. You should know that some violations of the Handbook and/or PCA's Student Handbook may result in discipline, up to and including expulsion. PCA reserves the right to terminate a student's enrollment (and their participation in the ISP) if his/her conduct is considered damaging or conflict with the interests of PCA. In this case, all fees paid will be non-refundable and the student's I-20 will be revoked. If you or your parents have any questions about any ISP Handbook or PCA Student/Parent Handbook policy, you should speak to a PCA Administrator.



COMMUNICATION

The International Student Program (ISP) and Prestonwood Christian Academy (PCA) as a whole, uses emails to communicate with students, parents, and host families. Checking and replying to emails will help greatly in your success at PCA.

Students are expected to check their pcalion.org email and parents are expected to check their personal email frequently and consistently to stay current with PCA and ISP communications.

You are responsible for recognizing that certain communications may be time- critical. Not checking emails, not reading the emails completely, or saying, "I didn't understand the email" are not acceptable excuses for missing PCA and ISP communications via email. You are responsible for any information sent via email. Students and parents are also expected to update the ISP Coordinator with any changes in email address.

MyPCA

Another way to ensure your success in the ISP program and at PCA is to check your MyPCA account several times a day. You can find very important information such as:

- Class schedule
- Assignments and due dates (don't just check your Canvas)
- Grades
- Absences
- Directories with faculty and student emails
- Class registration
- Missing payments/documents

Students are not the only ones expected to check their MyPCA account. Parents, too! Parents have access to all the above information as well. You are expected to become familiar with MyPCA and all the great information it contains.

MANDATORY ACTIVITIES

All ISP students are required to attend the following activities during the school year:

- Back to School Orientation Day in August
- Upper School/Middle School Retreat in August
- ISP Outings and Activities
- English proficiency testing in the Fall and Spring each year

Failure to comply and attend the above activities could impact your ongoing enrollment.

SCHOOL/ACADEMIC SUPPORT

You will attend school regularly, will be enrolled as a full-time student, and may be required to participate in study or tutoring times. You must do your very best make satisfactory academic progress (A or B grades) and **MUST** be involved in some extracurricular activities. **Missing assignments or turning in assignments late is NOT ACCEPTABLE and may result in your admission to PCA being terminated.** If you are achieving a C average or lower, PCA and your host family may require additional study hours - including tutoring - and limit your extracurricular and weekend activities until your grades are improved.

Your grades will be reviewed weekly. If you have an F in any class, PCA can require you to hire a tutor, chosen by PCA, at your parent's expense and you may not be allowed to participate in any social activities until you no longer have any grade below C.

Teachers WILL NOT negotiate grades with students. If you have a concern or problem with a grade, it is fair to discuss this with your teacher. Do not argue with a teacher.

You are not automatically eligible to compete for an athletic program at PCA. If you are interested in joining an athletic team at PCA, you must check the eligibility requirements of the program. Eligibility is determined on an individual basis by TAAPS governing body. TAAPS does not allow any International Students to participate in competitive varsity athletics their first year at PCA.

Academic Support Class

All first year International Students are required to take the Academic Support class. The purpose of this class is to assist students in the transition to PCA academically, socially, mentally, and spiritually. Students will receive personalized attention from a certified teacher who will assist each student with their academics as well as teacher and staff communication, PCA and US culture, and any other issues which may arise. Students will also have assignments and lessons centered around English grammar, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and SAT/ACT preparation. While students will earn a number grade in the class on their report card, the course will be listed on transcripts as Pass or Fail and will not affect their GPA.

Students will progress through the following classes:

- Middle School Academic Support
- 1st year Upper School - English Discourse
- 2nd year Upper School – Pragmatic Discourse
- 3rd year Upper School – Western Culture and Discourse

The academic support class will no longer be required of a student once they have achieved the following:

Score of 110 or above on the **Fall** Duolingo Practice Test
Earn A's and B's in all academic classes
Earn a 90 or above average for the year in their current Academic Support class
Recommendation from the Academic Support Teacher

The decision to discontinue the course will only be made in the Spring of each year and will be effective the following school year.

If a student is not currently enrolled in the class and is struggling academically in his/her classes, they may be required to re-enroll in the class. The decision will be based on grades and recommendation(s) by teachers (both ISP and classroom).

Learning English/English Only

You must make improving your English proficiency a first priority. To help do this, you are strongly encouraged to interact with your peers by speaking English, and you should not spend too much time only speaking in your native language. You will be expected to abide by the "English Only" rule in your host family home. The only exception to this rule is when you are communicating with your family and/or friends in your home country. You may not speak your native language when others who do not speak your language are present. Improving your proficiency in English will help you perform better in school and increase your adjustment to life in the U.S.

English Proficiency Practice Tests

PCA desires for each of our International Students to constantly be strengthening their English proficiency while at PCA. In order to do this and to monitor your progress, all International Students will take a practice test of English proficiency two times during the school year. These tests are mandatory for students grade 7-11 until a score of 100 on TOEFL or 120 on Duolingo is achieved at one of PCA's testing opportunities, at which time the tests become optional. There are no costs for the test, proctoring, or scoring of the exam. These scores will not be sent to universities but will be used by PCA for student placement and English proficiency tracking. The tests will be given each year in in the Fall and Spring.

RELATIONSHIPS

Your host family and PCA staff have the right to first meet any of your friends and approve or disapprove such friend's visit. Students must abstain from all sexual activity. Serious romantic involvement is strongly discouraged. If PCA staff feel that a relationship is interfering with your education, you may be required to discontinue the relationship. You may not take any action that may change the nature of your life (for example, become engaged or married) during your time at PCA.

If you experience any unwelcomed sexual conduct by another person, whether physical or verbal, you must immediately report the incident to your host parent(s) or a PCA official. Likewise, you must notify your host parent(s) or PCA official if you experienced harassment of any kind that is offensive or threatening to you and based on your race, gender, national origin, religion and/or disability. If harassment is found to have occurred, PCA will take appropriate corrective action.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES/CHURCH

PCA is a Christian school and Biblical beliefs are integrated in every course and school activity. You are required to attend church weekly with your host family. If your host family attends Sunday school/Bible Fellowship Class on Sunday mornings, you should also attend. Evening youth group meetings and events are encouraged but are not required.

STUDENT PLACE OF RESIDENCE

Students may live with biological parents who carry valid visas or green cards. If a parent must return to their homeland and the student must be left under the care of another adult, the ISP Coordinator must be notified at least 48 hours in advance. Parents must submit the name, relationship to student, address, email address, and phone number of the responsible individual as well as dates of the stay to the ISP Coordinator. Relocations such as these are temporary and should not last for over 1 month. Be sure to keep the ISP Coordinator notified.

All International Students must keep PCA's ISP Office informed regarding their current physical residence and contact information of their families or guardians. Written requests must be signed, dated, and submitted to the ISP Coordinator BEFORE the move will take place. Homestay placements and addresses are registered with the Department of Homeland Security and reported to SEVIS. Failure to report any change in physical residence could lead to the student's I-20 being revoked by SEVIS or withdrawn by PCA.

HEALTH

Medical/Insurance

All international students must have appropriate medical insurance at your parents' expense. Any costs incurred due to pre-existing conditions or required immunizations will be the responsibility of your parents. Your parents are responsible for any medical expenses. You must carry your insurance identification card with you at all times.

You must notify your host family and the school nurse regarding any medication you bring from your home country.

Required Immunizations

All students are required to maintain an up-to-date Immunizations record with PCA. Each year, PCA's school nurse reviews all students' immunization records and will notify you and your parents regarding missing immunizations. Typically, it is much easier and more cost effective to complete these requirements in your home country during school breaks. If you do not update the record prior to returning to PCA, you will be required to obtain the missing immunizations within the first month of school at your parent's expense.

If you are new to PCA, you will be required to provide documentation of up-to-date vaccinations as required by the state of Texas. The cost of fulfilling these requirements are your responsibility.

Counseling and Wellness

At times, PCA may require you to be evaluated for emotional wellness from a PCA approved mental health provider. If counseling is recommended as a result of the wellness exam or if you request counseling, both you and your parents may be asked to sign a release form for counseling services. If counseling is recommended and your parents refuse to give consent and release and/or if you refuse to willingly and actively participate, PCA may terminate your enrollment immediately. As trust is crucial in the counseling relationship, PCA will make every effort to protect your privacy.

Accident or Illness

- Your host family will provide initial care for you and seek medical attention if needed.
- Contact the ISP Coordinator or the school nurse as soon as possible.
- Follow the doctor's advice for emergency treatment.

First Aid

The school nurse is available during school hours to help advise you and your host family regarding medical care if you become ill or are injured. If it is a life-threatening or urgent situation, your host family will take you to the Emergency Room or Urgent Care.

Smoking, Alcohol and Drug Use

You must comply with all laws of the U.S. including state and city laws as a condition of your student visa. Under no circumstances may you use, purchase, or possess any tobacco products, e-cigarettes, drugs, or alcohol.

You may not use, possess, purchase, or own any type of fireworks or weapons, including, but not limited to, a knife, brass knuckles, slingshots, bow and arrows, throwing stars, switchblades, explosives, or a firearm. A firearm includes any device that can shoot a bullet, pellet, flare, tranquilizer, spear dart or other projectile, whether loaded or unloaded. This also includes air guns, dart guns, pellet guns, BB guns, pistols, revolvers, rifles, or plastic firearms made with 3-D printers and copying technology, as well as any ammunition for any such devices.

SCHOOL BREAKS

All airline arrangements must not be made without prior approval from the ISP Coordinator.

Your parents are responsible for booking and purchasing all flight tickets to, from, and within the U.S. for you. Once flight tickets to the U.S. have been purchased, you or your parents must forward a copy of the itinerary to the ISP Coordinator immediately. Your parents must notify the ISP Coordinator as soon as they become aware of any changes that need to be made to your flight schedule. Any changes of arrival or departure dates must be approved by the ISP Coordinator in advance unless such changes are due to circumstances beyond your control. **If you arrive later or depart earlier than the specified dates without prior approval of the ISP Coordinator, you will be charged a fee of \$100 per day.**

Aside from trips directly to and from your home country, you may not travel internationally or domestically alone or with a non-family member unless the ISP Coordinator receives written communication from your parent giving approval. If independent travel is permitted, the cost of this independent travel would be your responsibility.

Beginning of the School Year

You may not arrive more than 5 days prior to the first day of school (Back-to-School Day – the exact date varies by calendar year) without prior permission from your homestay family.

Attendance is mandatory on Back-to-School Day for all International Students. Failure to comply with this requirement could impact the student academically and/or ongoing enrollment as well as a **\$100 fine per day absent**. This day is also International Student Orientation Day for new and returning International Students.

All Upper School and Middle School International Students are also required to attend retreat. Failure to comply with this requirement could impact the student academically and/or ongoing enrollment.

Christmas Break

As an International Student, we want you to spend Christmas break with your immediate family (parents, siblings) either in your home country or in the United States because of the high value we put on the relationship between you and your home family. Even a 10-day to 2-week break is very helpful to your cultural, emotional, and psychological adjustment. You may spend the Christmas break with your Host Family with prior approval by your Host Family and the Host Family Agency. You may be required to pay additional funds for the extra time with your Host Family. Travel arrangements for all school break plans are the financial responsibility of you and your family and **a copy of your itinerary must be submitted to the ISP Coordinator** no later than a month before the last day of school.

International Students must work with the ISP regarding flight departures to ensure final exams are taken appropriately. All International Students are required to return to the U.S. in time to be present for the first day of classes for the spring semester. **Failure to comply with this**

requirement could impact the student academically and/or ongoing enrollment as well as a \$100 fine per day absent.

Summer Break

You should go home every summer to reconnect with your family. International Students must work with ISP administration regarding flight departures to ensure final exams are taken appropriately. You are not permitted to leave the US prior to the last day of final exams. **If you leave prior to the end of finals without ISP administration permission, your continued attendance at PCA could be in jeopardy plus you will have a fine of \$100 for each day you left early.** You are expected to depart no more than 5 days past the official last day of school, unless prior arrangements with your Host Family have been made at least 2 weeks in advance.

You should not book or purchase flight tickets between your home country and the U.S. for the following school year until re-enrollment contracts have been completed and tuition has been paid in full.

OTHER

Visa

You must comply with all restrictions imposed on your student visa which state that you may not be employed while enrolled at PCA except for certain on-campus work. If you are found to have engaged in unauthorized employment, you may be subject to losing your I-20 per US INS regulations and will be forced to return to your home country for violating the terms and conditions of your visa.

Termination

Although PCA hopes your enrollment will be mutually rewarding, PCA has the right to dismiss you or require your withdrawal when, in PCA's professional judgement, PCA deems it appropriate to do so as a result of:

- conduct on your part which is contrary to the PCA's Student/Parent Handbook policies/instructions or to the policies in this International Student Handbook, or
- conduct which is unsafe to self or others, or
- academic performance which is inconsistent with the standards expected at PCA, or
- academic performance in violation of your probationary admission (if applicable), or
- other acts or behavior PCA deems unacceptable.

In this case, **all fees paid will be nonrefundable and your I-20 will be revoked.**

Miscellaneous

If you need additional help for a matter not related to the academic requirements of PCA, your family must request permission for the activity and provide necessary funds and compensation for the activity (specialized athletic participation, orthodontic work, etc.).

You are prohibited from engaging in conduct that may change your legal status or significantly alter your physical appearance while enrolled at PCA. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to, getting married, becoming pregnant, causing a pregnancy, cosmetic surgery, tattoos, piercings other than in the ear (boys may not have piercings of any kind), or dying your hair an unnatural color (such as green, purple, pink, etc.).

Your parents have given PCA and partner organizations the right to use your photograph for reproduction in any medium for the purposes of publication, advertising, display or editorial use. No personal information will be publicized.

HOST FAMILY LIFE

International Student Expectations

At your homestay, you can expect:

- Decent food, a clean room with comfortable furniture, a closet, a window that opens, internet access, and adequate lighting. You may share a bathroom with other members of the household.
- Privacy. Others should not enter your room when the door is closed. They should knock first and await your permission before entering.
- Reasonable use of the laundry facilities. This is typically 2 or 3 loads per week, depending upon your host family guidelines.
- A prepared dinner at least 3 nights a week.

Responsibilities of International Students:

Be Friendly.

- Participate in family activities. Spending too much time in your room with the door closed or playing video games with your friends instead of interacting with your host family may result in you not being asked to return to the host home in subsequent years or your immediate removal from the home.
- Don't wear headphones or earpods continuously when around the host family and especially if going places with the family.
- Talk with your host family and be willing to share your experiences with them.
- You should be easy to get along with, respect host parents, and obey host parents' rules.

Be Independent.

- Clean up after yourself. Ask your host family if you have any questions. Members of the host family are not your servants. **You are responsible to keep your own room clean. You are also responsible to clean the areas you use, particularly the kitchen, study area, and bathroom.** Don't leave clothes or other personal belongings around the house.
- You are expected to be on time for appointments and classes.

Be Courteous.

- Your host family are not your chauffeurs or your servants. If you need them to take you places, you should communicate with them where you need to go, when you need to go, and when you need picked up in advance. Be flexible and patient.
- You should be home in time for dinner or advise your host family **in advance** if you will not be there or be late.
- You should follow the family's schedule. For example, don't expect to watch television at 3 am or to do laundry or cook meals whenever you want.

Show Respect.

- Be courteous by asking how late and how loudly you can listen to music or watch television, etc. Be sure to respect the family's need for quiet periods.
- Never take food or drinks into your bedroom unless you receive permission.
- Treat your host family's property with respect. You will be held responsible for damages.
- You should respect the family's privacy.

Respect House Rules.

- Always obey house rules. Your host family will go over these rules when you first move in. You should keep a copy of the rules so you can refer to them. If you are unsure of any of the rules or if there is a problem, talk with your host parents.
- Ask permission **in advance** to bring a friend home or to go out with friends.
- Don't leave without getting permission **in advance** and informing your family where you are going.
- Tell your host family where you are going and who you are going with. Do NOT lie to them as this may impact your ability to stay in the home and possibly your enrollment at PCA.
- Don't use the family's electronic devices without permission.
- You MAY NOT smoke, drink alcohol, or play your music or videos loud.

Be Direct.

- Talk about any problems you may be experiencing that your host family can help you with. Don't worry about making mistakes using English.
- If something seems improper (example, you are being asked to babysit watch the children frequently) you should speak with your host family, homestay agent, or the ISP Coordinator.
- Host family assignments are made for the entire school year. Every effort should be made to resolve any problems with your host family.

Be Polite.

- Be sure to say "please" when making a request and "thank you".
- In the US, it is polite to use the phrase, "would like". For example, it is better to say, "I would like to take a shower," than, "I want to take a shower."
- It is always better to ask permission to do something than to assume you are allowed.

Get Involved.

- You need to get involved in the PCA community and the local community through activities like attending and participating in school, church, or community events. Don't spend all your time with other international students. Seek guidance from your host parents and teachers when choosing friends.

Learn about Christianity.

- You are expected to: learn about the Christian faith, respect the Christian faith of those around you, and follow the guidelines for Christian living found in PCA's student handbook.
- **You are expected to attend church with your host family. It is a requirement of your admission contract with PCA.**

Conflicts and Resolutions

If there is a problem with your host family, you must seek to resolve the problem first through direct discussion with your host family. If you and your host family are unable to agree, you and your host family may seek assistance from your Host Family Agency. If they are not able to resolve the issue, you may consult the ISP staff. If you are experiencing relational stress, difficulty, abuse, or harassment of any kind, you must immediately report it to the ISP Coordinator or Teacher. However, **you are not allowed to change host families without prior approval from the ISP Coordinator.**

Host Family Assignment

You may not change your host family assignment mid-year unless it is an extreme situation. Any concerns of the student or family should be shared with the ISP Coordinator. Host family assignments are for one year at a time.

You are expected to become a part of your host family. You will be asked to do chores and be responsible in your host family's household. Chore and responsibilities may include helping with cooking, washing dishes, laundry, and cleaning. **You should help as much as you can.** For example, assist your host parents bringing groceries into the house helping put them away. **It is also nice to volunteer for something that needs to be done.**

You must follow the host family's rules and customs including, but not limited to, curfews, household chores, and internet use.

Your host family will expect you to act like an adult, so be responsible and respectful. Be considerate to your host family. If you are going to be late for dinner, let them know in advance. If you are going out, ask permission in advance (at least 48 hours.) Let them know where you are, who you are with, and when you plan to be home. If you are going to be late, call or text your host family to let them know. They will be worried. Although your host family will generally treat you like an adult, your host parents are responsible for you and will ask you to work on areas of your life that need improvement.

Social Media Policy

In addition to PCA's Technology Acceptable Use Policy, you must follow other social media policies to protect the Host Family's privacy. Do not post photos or videos of any member of your host family without their approval. Do NOT discuss any matters related to any member of your host family unless you obtain prior approval of your host family. Furthermore, you must promptly delete any comments, photos, or videos related to the host family if requested by the host family.

Similarly, your host family is expected to provide the same level of privacy to you. Your host family will ask you for permission before mentioning or posting photos of you.

Finances

You should have sufficient financial support to ensure your well-being during the entire program. You should have a credit/ATM card with at least a \$1,000 credit limit to cover expenses throughout the year.

Your host family will pay for routine expenses such as food, snacks, basic toiletries, and local transportation. However, you are responsible for any other expenses such as your cell phone bill, shopping, student social events, expensive toiletries, special foods, physical exams/doctor appointments/vaccinations, eye exams, special snacks, movies, sporting events, travel, clothing, outings with friends and other optional purchases.

Do not loan or borrow money from your host family or other students. Never allow someone else to use your credit/debit card. If you are having trouble with money, talk with the ISP Coordinator or Host Family Agency about your situation.

Electronics

Your host family may have house rules on where and when you may use devices in the home. Your host parents may limit computer, internet, and cell phone usage if they feel it is interfering with your academic progress or hindering your social connection with your host family.

You are required to have a charged, working cell phone that can be reached by dialing a US domestic phone number. You are also responsible for keeping your phone charged and turned on whenever you are not at home so that your host family can reach you.

Host families are required to have wireless internet available in their home. The primary language settings of all your electronic devices must be in English. Your host family may ask you for the password to your electronic device(s) so internet filtering software may be installed.

You are strictly prohibited from intentionally viewing a website with pornography, extreme violence, profanity, and /or other inappropriate content. Depending on the severity of any misconduct, you may be subject to discipline up to and including expulsion from PCA.

Transportation

While enrolled at PCA, you may only get a US driver's license with the approval of your host family, home family, and the ISP Coordinator. You may NEVER operate a motor vehicle, even in your driveway or backyard without an official US driver's license.

You will rely on your host family for transportation. They will provide you with rides to and from school and will arrange or provide transportation to and from church and extracurricular activities such as sports, band activities, retreats, and other school functions. Before you

commit to any outings/activities, you MUST discuss and receive approval from your host parents as soon as you are aware of the activity and at least 24 hours in advance. This shows your host family respect and understanding. You should discuss ride needs with your host family and be flexible knowing their overall family needs.

You may not ever hitchhike or solicit a ride from a stranger. Taxis, Uber, or similar services may only be used in rare circumstances **with host parent permission, and only if you are over 18 or sharing a ride with a host family approved individual who is 18 years or older. You are not allowed to accept a ride not approved by your host family in advance.**

QUESTIONS

We hope this International Student Handbook will help you to understand what is expected of you as a student at PCA. Understand that no set of written guidelines can anticipate every situation that may occur **and** that PCA reserves the right to take such actions as it deems necessary regarding any matter that arises while you are a student with us. Should you have any questions about these policies or any other matter while a student at PCA, you can speak with the Coordinator or Teacher of the International Student Program.

We wish you a great year at Prestonwood Christian Academy!!

