

Our Lady's Little Christians Preschool
Family Handbook

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About Us (Communication, Phone Calls, Web Page, Email)

Our Lady's Little Christians (OLLC) is a non-profit organization funded by the tuition charged for each student. We are licensed by the MD State Department of Education, Office of Child Care(OCC).

The phone number for OLLC is 301-645-7112. Any necessary phone calls should be made on class days between the hours of 8:00 AM - 3:45 PM. Our fax number is 301-645-3635.

OLLC's web page is linked to the OLHC Parish web page. You may access the calendar, monthly newsletters, this handbook and other information at www.olhoc.org (click on preschool).

Email is our preferred form of communication for newsletters and notes. Please send an email to PRESCHOOL81@verizon.net to be added to the mailing list. There will always be paper copies available for those who prefer not to receive email. When you receive your child's school bag, there will be a large safety pin attached. Notes sent home are usually pinned to the student's school bag. **Please leave the pin attached and use it to attach notes to school.** If there is a form that is to be returned, please do so as quickly as possible. A monthly newsletter will be emailed to each family and a copy will be posted on the Preschool bulletin board in the hallway. If your child goes to a day care provider after class, please make sure that they keep any notes for you so that you will receive them when you pick up your child.

Philosophy/Goals

OLLC is a Christian learning program for children 3 and 4 years of age. The beginning of a child's education is an important step; therefore, our goals are:

1. To provide growth and development (physical, social, emotional, and spiritual),
2. To provide for skill development, knowledge, creativity, and independence,
3. To create a spiritual atmosphere where positive self-images can be built,
4. To provide the very best early childhood education for young children.

Staff

Each member of our staff is dedicated to working with young children. They participate each year in continuing education in the areas of child development, curriculum, special needs, health/safety/nutrition, professionalism, and community. Our adult: child ratio is 1:8. All OLLC staff members are certified in CPR and First Aid. All full time staff members participate in the MSDE/OCC Maryland Child Care Credential.

Board of Directors

OLLC is guided and supported by a Board of Directors that is comprised of registered parishioners of Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church and parents/guardians of students (past and present) enrolled at OLLC. The Board of Directors meets regularly. Their meeting schedule will be posted. The first 30 minutes of each board meeting may be allotted for parents and community members to address any issues or concerns to the board. It is recommended that these issues and concerns be brought to the attention of teachers and the director for resolution prior to addressing the board.

Curriculum

OLLC has a planned and coordinated curriculum for the 3- and 4-year-old program. It is our hope that your child will be enrolled for both levels. The primary focus of our program for 3-year-olds is social/emotional development; the primary focus of our program for 4-year-olds is kindergarten preparation. The daily schedule is posted in each classroom.

Classroom Management

When behavior problems arise, our trained staff addresses them in a positive and constructive manner. Children will be taught how to solve many conflicts themselves. Serious problems are corrected by removing the student from the disruptive situation or activity. The student remains under adult supervision during the entire time and returns when he/she is ready.

The director reserves the right to request that a student who becomes a constant source of disruption to the group be withdrawn from the program. This situation would be rare and every effort made to avoid it.

Observation

Any adult wishing to observe a classroom must check in at the Administrative Office and be escorted throughout the building by a staff member. Parents/guardians of prospective students may ask to observe our classrooms while classes are in session. A letter of introduction will be required if a visitor is not the parent/guardian of a current or prospective student. Prospective students may not be allowed to observe with their parents during classroom time, but may visit the classroom by appointment.

School Bags

School bags, purchased from OLLC, are required for all students. We encourage all children to carry the bags each day with their snack placed inside and any notes from home pinned to the outside. These bags will fit nicely in our cubbies and are easier for our students to manipulate than backpacks and other bags with zippers, etc. Each child's name will be printed on a bag you purchase and they will be ready for when you come to visit us on the first day of school.

Religion

A weekly service in the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament will be conducted for the students. Please see the dates listed on the school calendar. Families are invited to all services and are encouraged to attend whenever possible. Family members should sit in the back of the Chapel. Students will sit with their class and their teacher. The Blessed Sacrament is present in the Chapel, so respectful and prayerful behavior is expected from everyone. Your conduct will help us teach the children what is appropriate.

Changes in Personal Information

Please send a note to the student's teacher indicating any changes of phone numbers, emergency phone numbers, or addresses. All changes must be made in writing. Emergency numbers must be local and must be someone who could get your child if you are not at home. It is important that our records are correct and current.

Emergency Procedures

Our students practice fire and tornado/high winds drills on a regular basis. We are prepared with a safe space in the building so that children and staff can be sheltered in place if necessary. You will receive information and updates on these procedures as circumstances dictate.

Arrival Procedure

An adult must accompany each child into the church building and into their classroom where all children must be signed in. Please use the shopping center parking lot directly across Village Street from the church. Parking along the Village Street curb is not safe and is strictly prohibited. Use the existing crosswalk to cross Village Street to the Administrative Office entrance doors which are monitored. The front church doors are locked daily after 9:00 a.m. Mass. We request that you do not park in the turnaround area immediately in front of the church. If you or anyone who will be bringing or picking up your child has any special needs that make it difficult to follow these guidelines, we ask that you bring this to the attention of the director. We are willing to assist you in this area.

Dismissal Procedure

It is very important for you to be on time to pick up your child or carpool. Your child will only be released to the person(s) you indicate on your Emergency Card. No student will be allowed to leave the building unaccompanied. **Written authorization** must be sent to your child's teacher if your child will be going home with someone other than you or the usual person specified on your Emergency Card. The note must specify the name and phone number of the person picking up your child. In case of an emergency situation only, phone calls for authorization must include the name of the person calling and their phone number for verification **and** the name and phone number of the person picking up the student. Please make sure that the person picking up will have proper identification. The teacher will open the classroom doors when the class is ready for dismissal. The students will remain in their seats until you enter the classroom, sign them out, and take their hand to accompany them from the building. This will be discussed at Parent/Teacher Orientation evening.

Remember that younger children should never be left unattended in your vehicle.

Absences

The Office of Childcare requires that you send a dated and signed note to the teacher on the day a student returns from any absence. The note should explain why the student was absent. Please be specific concerning illnesses. These notes are filed in the students' folders.

Illness/When to Keep Your Child Home

Please keep your child home when any of the following symptoms are present:

- ✓ Fever of 100.5 degrees
- ✓ Vomiting/diarrhea in the past 24 hours
- ✓ Sore throat with any fever
- ✓ Rash that blisters, develops pus, or is uncomfortable
- ✓ Ear pain
- ✓ Cough with wheezing or a barking sound
- ✓ Yellow/green discharge from eyes, nose, or cough

Please keep your child home if there is any doubt concerning illness.

All parents/guardians must complete a form required by the Office of Child Care concerning any individual needs required by their child. We will not discriminate against children or staff with special needs or communicable diseases. Our policy is to disclose only the information necessary to protect the health and safety of others and to ensure appropriate care of the student. If parents or staff needs to be alerted to a case of contagious disease, it is our policy not to reveal the identity of the infected student or his family. We will follow the usual infection control procedures and use proper sanitation. Universal precautions will be used for all students and staff when any body fluid is involved.

Illness in Class

If your child becomes ill, he/she cannot remain in the classroom. Our procedure is to contact the parent first, and then the emergency contact will be notified if a parent/guardian cannot be reached. Please call OLLC immediately if your child contracts a communicable disease such as flu, measles, mumps, chicken pox, scarlet fever, etc. No students may attend while results of medical cultures are pending.

Readmission after Illness

Absence due to illness requires a written statement or a physician's certificate of freedom from illness before the student can return to the class. This note must be sent with the student on the day the student returns and must be dated and signed. Medication may be given to children only upon written prescription of a physician and the physician must complete a medication form. See the director for a copy of the form. The first dose of any medication must be given at home.

Consulting Physician

Dr. Aziza Alam, M.D., F.A.A.P. has consented to be available on a consulting basis. She is Board Certified in Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine. Her office is located at 6 Post Office Road, Suite 101, Waldorf, MD 20602. Her phone numbers are 301-645-1133 and 301-843-7222.

School Closing

Weather-related school closings will correspond with those of Charles County Public Schools. If the county schools:

- Have a One Hour Delay - AM and PM Sessions open at the regular time.
- Have a Two Hour Delay - AM and PM attendance will alternate. Sessions will be 12:30-3:30. You will receive a phone call (and email whenever possible) **when it is your child's turn to attend** in this case.
- Are Closed for the Day - AM and PM Sessions are canceled.

In the Southern Maryland area, there is always a possibility of weather-related school closings. In addition to the expected winter snow closings and delays, it is not unusual for school to be closed or delayed in the spring or fall due to flooding, high winds, or other factors related to a tropical storm or other event. Always tune in to a local radio station, TV station, or website for updated information on school closings/delays.

Phone Chain

Each class will have a telephone roster which will be used for exceptional circumstances or anytime an immediate message needs to be sent to the entire class. The director will activate the phone chain by calling the teachers. The teachers will call phone chain coordinators. Coordinators will call other parents/guardians. This will be explained at Orientation. Each family will receive a copy of the class phone roster, after all paperwork has been signed.

Volunteers

Volunteers are welcome at OLLC! Any volunteer who will have contact with the children will be required to complete the Archdiocese of Washington Volunteer Application, Virtus Child Protection Training workshop, and fingerprinting and background check. There is also a staff/volunteer orientation that must be completed prior to working in the classroom.

Conferences

There will be two scheduled conference days. Additional conferences may be scheduled at any time at the request of the teacher or the family.

Adult Conduct

The staff of OLLC extends courtesy to all family members and caregivers. The same courtesy is expected to be extended toward other family members or toward any staff member by every adult who enters our facility. Failure to abide by this policy will result in the dismissal of your child from the preschool program. When your child has been dismissed from class and is in your care, safe and appropriate behavior is expected. There should be **no running** in the hallways and inside voices should be used when in the church building. Please use caution when exiting the building and do not allow children to play in planting beds or destroy church property.

Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

As required by the Office of Child Care, smoking of cigarettes, cigars, or pipes and the consumption of alcohol or controlled dangerous substances will not be allowed in the facility, outdoor play areas, or during field trips.

Seat Belt Law

Maryland's Child Safety Seat Law states that every child under 8 years old must ride in an appropriate child restraint unless the child is 4 feet, 9 inches or taller, or weighs more than 65 pounds. Adult safety belts are permissible for children 8 and older if they are over 57 inches tall and over 65 pounds.

Tuition Payment Procedure

Tuition is payable in advance on the first school day of each month, September through April. May tuition is paid in advance at registration. All payments will be received by mail or may be put in the gold mailbox in the Administrative Office. Please do not give your tuition payment to teachers or assistants because they are busy with school matters during school hours. Credit/debit cards will not be accepted and all checks or money orders should be made payable to OLLC or Our Lady Help of Christians (OLHC), 100 Village Street, Waldorf, MD 20602. Please print your child's name and the month for which you are paying in the lower left-hand corner of the check so that you will be properly credited. Vacations and missed days are at your expense. There will be a \$25.00 fee charged for all returned checks.

Late Tuition Payment

A \$20.00 penalty fee is automatically incurred when a check is not received by the 5th school day of each month. This does not refer to the 5th school day your child might attend. It means the 5th day that school is open. It is your responsibility to include the \$20.00 penalty fee with your tuition check. When payment, including penalty fee, is not received by the 10th school day of the month, the student will be dismissed until the account is paid in full including the penalty. If financial difficulties come to you during the school year, please make an appointment to discuss the situation with the director. We try our best not to forget our Christian ministry in the midst of finances.

Tuition Assistance Fund

O LLC has established a Tuition Assistance Fund. Contributions can be made In Memory or In Honor of students, staff, or loved ones. Anyone desiring to contribute should request a donation envelope. Donations may be made at any time of the year (birthdays, graduations, etc.). Remember that your generosity in donating to this fund will assist a student to remain in the program during financial difficulties.

Late Pick Up Fee

A \$25.00 fee will be incurred when a student is not picked up within ten minutes after dismissal time (11:30 a.m. or 3:30 p.m.). This fee will not be applied if a call is made to the office prior to dismissal time. The official time will be by the classroom clock. The teacher will issue a late fee form when the student is picked up and payment is due the next school day.

Registration/Rosters

Registration for the 5-day classes will be closed to the public until February to give all current families the opportunity to fill those seats. Registration for the 2- and 3-day classes will be ongoing and tuition will be charged at the current rate when the non-refundable registration fee is paid. Birth certificate and immunization records are required when a student is being registered for the first time. Each age level has an assigned student capacity and waiting lists will be formed when all openings for classes are filled. Tuition of currently enrolled students must be paid and up to date before they may register for the next school year. Post-dated checks will not be accepted at registration or at any time during the year.

Class rosters are distributed periodically. These rosters are to be used for school-related purposes such as forming carpools. They are not to be used for any solicitation purposes.

Personal Habits/Toilet Training

Children should be encouraged to take care of as many personal care items as possible. This increases self-esteem and makes the transition to school much easier. 3- and 4-year-old children can learn to button, zip, snap, open their own snacks and drinks, and wipe themselves after using the bathroom. All students are required to be completely toilet trained. Our license does not allow for diapering of any type, including disposable pull-ups.

Dress

All articles of clothing that will be removed should be labeled with your child's name.

Dress your child in comfortable clothing that is appropriate for the season. We will go outside each day unless prohibited by the weather. Sneakers or sturdy shoes with rubber soles are the preferred footwear for all students. Preschool experiences can get messy, so please have your child wear clothes to school that can get dirty. These clothes should also be easy for your child to get into and out of when using the toilet. Please consider the following:

- ✓ Long dresses, slippery dress shoes, flip-flops, and sandals are dangerous when climbing or running.
- ✓ Belts, coveralls, and jeans with snaps/buttons are difficult for children to manage when toileting.
- ✓ Girls should wear shorts under dresses so they feel free to climb on the playground and play on the floor.

Snack Time

Napkins will be provided. Group snacks will be allowed for special occasions at the discretion of the teacher. Snack time will be discussed in more detail at Parent/Teacher Orientation.

There will be one snack period daily per class. Please send a snack item and a beverage daily. Place the entire snack in a resealable plastic bag labeled with the child's first and last name. All snacks should be nutritious and ready to eat in small, child-size portions without additional preparation required. Some suggestions for snacks are fruit, veggies, crackers, muffins, homemade cookies. Items that will melt or get sticky should be avoided. Please consider the following when choosing a snack for your child:

- ✓ No soda or candy
- ✓ You are encouraged to use reusable containers; please consider safety and do not send glass containers to school.
- ✓ Suggested beverages are water, fruit/vegetable juice, or **shelf-stable** milk/soymilk.
- ✓ Snacks should not require refrigeration. Snacks that are purchased in the **dairy or meat** section are considered to be potentially hazardous and are not allowed since they are required to be stored at or below 40F.
- ✓ Do not send yogurt, lunchmeat or leftover meat for snack.

Birthdays

Birthdays will be observed in the classrooms. Each teacher will explain how she will handle birthdays in her classroom at Parent/Teacher Orientation. Balloons, cakes, candles, and candy will not be part of the class celebration. No party invitations can be handed out unless the entire class is invited. This policy is to protect the sensitive feelings of every student.

Field Trips

A field trip permission slip must be signed and returned with each student before the first day of classes. Walks on church property are also considered a field trip by OCC. You will be notified prior to any trip that requires the class to leave church property (e.g.: the PD Brown Library). Please contact the director or your child's teacher if you work with or know someone who would be willing to visit our center to speak with the students (e.g.: dentists, doctors, firefighters). Parents will **not** be allowed to smoke at any time during a field trip, including the time spent in the car while driving to or from the destination. Field trips will be discussed at Parent/Teacher Orientation in more detail. Cell phone usage should be limited to emergency use only while accompanying the class on a field trip.

Show and Tell

A time for Show and Tell will be included in the daily lesson plan for each class. Your child will bring a note home specifying the start date of Show and Tell and the day of the week assigned to each child. This will be discussed in more detail at Parent/Teacher Orientation. If classes are canceled or your child is absent on the assigned day, please wait until the next week for Show and Tell time. Show and Tell items should be brought in a bag with the child's name printed on it.

Visiting Pets

Please see the director or your child's teacher at least one week in advance if you want to bring your pet to the classroom. You must provide a valid Maryland Animal Health Certificate stating that the pet is up to date on all inoculations and a Rabies Vaccination Certificate. The pet must be housebroken and you must plan to take the pet home after Show and Tell. **Birds can carry diseases and are not allowed at OLLC.**

Toys from home

Children are discouraged from bringing toys from home on a regular basis. There will be occasions when they are asked to bring a toy or other item that relates to the current unit. We cannot ensure the safety of toys brought from home, so please choose carefully. If a child has a "lovey" or security item he/she wishes to bring to school, the item must be small enough to fit in the school bag (where it will remain while school is in session).