

Our Lady's Little Christians Preschool
Family Handbook

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About Us (Communication, Phone Calls, Web Page, Facebook, 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). We follow the policies of the Archdiocese of Washington Catholic Schools Office. 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 Our Lady Help of Christians (OLHOC) Parish web page. You may access the preschool website and other information at www.olhoc.org (click on preschool). Also, to receive or share more information, "Like" Our Lady's Little Christians on Facebook!

Email is our preferred form of communication for newsletters and notes. Please send an email to preschool@olhoc.org 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 distributed to each family and a copy will be posted on the OLLC News & Info bulletin board in the hallway. If your child is transported by a relative or goes to a child 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. Likewise, it is helpful if you share information with those people.

Community Resources

School information and community resources are posted on the OLLC News & Info bulletin board in the office hallway. Community resources (e.g. public library, MD State Dept of Education, Health Dept., Humane Society, etc.) are updated monthly as needed. Please let the director know if there is some information you would like to see posted.

Phone Roster

Each family may receive a copy of the class phone roster after all paperwork has been signed. These rosters are to be used for school-related purposes such as forming carpools or planning class parties. They are not to be used for any solicitation purposes.

SchoolMessenger

SchoolMessenger is the telephone and email communication service we will use to deliver important messages and reminders. The email addresses and phone numbers you provided when you registered will be added to the list. You can download the SchoolMessenger app.

Philosophy/Goals

OLLC is a Christian learning program for preschool children of varying abilities, cultures, home languages, and backgrounds. 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. All full time OLLC staff members are certified in CPR and First Aid and have taken Emergency Preparedness and Medication Administration training. 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 may be 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 each age group in our program. It is our hope that your child will be enrolled until he or she is ready to move on to Kindergarten. 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/Behavior guidance policy

When behavior problems arise, our trained staff addresses them in a positive and constructive manner. Children will be taught how to solve many problems themselves. To foster children's own ability to become self-disciplined, center staff will use:

- positive guidance
- redirection
- consistent, clear, understandable rules and expectations
- planning ahead to prevent problems
- encouragement of positive behavior

Staff will:

- encourage children to respect other people, to respect property, and to learn to be responsible for and reflect on their own behavior
- guide children, through acceptable choices, to develop self-control and orderly, respectful conduct in relationship to peers and adults
- intervene immediately when a child becomes physically aggressive to protect all children and encourage behavior that is acceptable

Aggressive behavior toward staff or children is unacceptable. 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. In the event that challenging behavior occurs, the staff will never:

- hit, shake, grab, or threaten a child with physical harm
- yell at, berate, shame, ridicule, or belittle a child
- withhold food, toys, or activities
- embarrass, humiliate, or isolate a child

(cont.) 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 reasonable effort made to avoid it.

Catholic Identity

"Parents/guardians and students understand and acknowledge the Roman Catholic religious nature of Our Lady's Little Christians (OLLC). Parents/guardians and students agree not to publicly repudiate the teachings and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, and will respect and support the unique identity that OLLC derives from its Catholic faith. As the primary educators of their children, parents/guardians will not act in ways that contradict the Catholic nature of OLLC. Parents/guardians shall cooperate fully with the school and the students shall participate in all required school programming, including instruction in the Catholic faith and attendance at Mass (Chapel). As the primary educators of the students, parents/guardians agree to act in ways that promote the best interests of the church and school and will comply with the policies of the Archdiocese of Washington (ADW) and OLLC." (Source: ADW catholic Schools Office)

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 through OLLC and printed with the child's name, 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.

Supplies

OLLC does not have a list of required supplies for each child. When items are needed, they are posted on the Giving Tree in the office hallway. Please donate these items as you are able.

Nap mats

Nap mats, purchased through OLLC, are required for all full-day students. Mats will be sent home at the end of each week to be washed and returned the following week.

Chapel

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 contacts, addresses, court orders, or custody agreements. All changes must be made in writing. At least one emergency contact must be local and must be someone who could get your child if you cannot be reached. 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 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. Children will always be released to their parent, unless custody paperwork has been provided to contradict that. 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.

Remember that it is against the law to leave children and pets 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 over 100 degrees
- ✓ Any fever combined with any other symptom of illness

- ✓ 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
- ✓ Red or pink eyes with pain and/or discharge

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/guardian 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, strep, scarlet fever, etc. No students may attend while results of medical cultures are pending.

Readmission after Illness/Medication

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.

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 - Sessions will be 12:30-3:30.
You will receive a phone call or text, and email 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. There are no make-up days.

Note: full-day students will attend at 12:30 on all two hour delay days.

Volunteers

Parents, guardians, and extended families are always welcome to visit or to volunteer 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 background check. There is also an orientation that must be completed prior to working in the classroom.

Assessments/Conferences/Developmental Screening

Assessments are conducted throughout the year. Developmental screenings must be completed annually. These will require your participation, and will be explained to you. There will be two scheduled conference days. The first conference will be to discuss the results of the developmental screening. Appropriate referrals will be made as needed. We will use Ages and Stages (ASQ-3) for annual screening. 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, Weapons

As required by the Office of Child Care, use of nicotine or tobacco, and the consumption of alcohol or controlled dangerous substances will not be allowed in the facility, outdoor play areas, or during field trips. No weapons will be allowed except as permitted by law. Children will not possess weapons.

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.

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. All payments will be received by mail or may be put in the tuition box 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. 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 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 fee with your tuition check.

When payment, including \$20.00 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 fee. If financial difficulties come to you during the school year, please make an appointment to discuss the situation with the director or Pastor. We try our best not to forget our Christian ministry in the midst of finances.

Tuition Assistance Fund

OLLC 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. Payment is due the next school day.

Registration

Registration will be closed to the general public until February to give all current families the opportunity to fill those seats. Tuition will be charged at the current rate when the non-refundable registration fee or deposit is paid. Birth certificate and immunization records are required when a student is being registered for the first time. Custody paperwork and any other court order must be provided and kept up-to-date. Each class 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.

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. Our license does not allow for diapering of any type, including disposable pull-ups. Please see the director if your child is not confidently potty trained.

Dress/UNIFORM Policy

Children will be required to wear an OLLC logo polo shirt daily. They may wear either an OLLC logo polo shirt OR an OLLC logo T-shirt on Fridays. (Note: 2-day students may choose to wear either an OLLC logo polo shirt or an OLLC logo T-shirt on Thursdays, since they do not attend on Fridays.) For the 2017-18 school year, children may wear any color of OLLC logo shirt. We will transition to a few specific colors the following year. The required shirts will be available for purchase at OLLC.

Any pants, shorts, or skirts may be worn with the following conditions: Children must be able to fasten and unfasten any buttons, snaps, or belts when using the bathroom or changing clothes. Shorts or leggings must be worn under skirts.

Shoes should have flat soles and should fasten to the child's foot. No flip-flops, crocs, heels, or any other type of shoe that may come off while running and playing. Keep in mind that our playground surface is mulch. We will go outside each day unless prohibited by the weather. Exceptions to this policy may be made on school photo days, during Spirit weeks, and on other special days.

Please send a change of clothes for your child. See the specific instructions from your child's teacher. All articles of clothing that may be removed should be labeled with your child's name.

Snack Time

Please send a full water bottle with sport or safety top daily. Napkins and additional water 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 by your child's teacher.

There will be one snack period daily per half-day class. Please send a snack item and water daily. Place the 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, pretzels, 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, candy, or cupcakes/cake
- ✓ Per OCC regulations, no beverages containing any added sugar or sweeteners or caffeine will be allowed.
- ✓ Please send water to drink. If you wish to send an additional beverage, it must be fruit/vegetable juice with no added sugar or sweeteners, or **plain, shelf-stable** milk/alternative milk.
- ✓ You are encouraged to use reusable containers; please consider safety and do not send glass containers to school.
- ✓ Per OCC regulations, snacks may 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.
- ✓ Any questions? Please ask.

Note: Full day students should bring a packed lunch and two snacks daily. 1% milk will be provided for lunch only, on a rotating schedule, by the full day parents. Lunches only will be placed in the refrigerator.

Screen Time

Screen time is limited in our classrooms. Children should see less than 30 minutes/week of video or photos on a TV or other "screen" device on a regular basis while in school. Exceptions may be made for special occasions. In addition, an adult staff member will control all classroom access to the Internet. Children may be shown a relevant photo or video to enhance understanding of a concept or lesson. Children may occasionally choose to play an educational game online as a "center", but will not be permitted to change the website or to "click" outside of the game interface.

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/cupcakes, candles,

and candy will not be part of the class celebration. No party invitations can be handed out unless the entire class is invited. **Please consider healthy snack options, and do not bring cupcakes, cake, or any sweetened beverages.**

Field Trips

A field trip permission slip is part of the contract that must be signed and returned with each student before the first day of classes. Walks on or off church property are considered a field trip by OCC. You will be notified prior to any trip that requires the class to leave the immediate area. 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/chaperones will not be allowed to smoke at any time during a field trip.** Field trips will be discussed by your child's teacher 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 by your child's teacher. 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. Please see the "Toys from home" section of the handbook for limits on allowed items. Also, please see the director or your child's teacher if you are unsure about whether an item may be brought for show and tell.

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.** Reptiles and wild animals are also not allowed, due to MD regulations.

Toys from home/electronics and technology items

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). Children will not bring to school (or possess at school) any cell phone, tablet, or any other device with the capabilities of a cell phone or tablet (e.g. smart phones, laptops, game consoles, and Bluetooth enabled or wearable devices such as smart watches and fitness bands). These capabilities include, but may not be limited to, ability to access the Internet and ability to record (audio and/or video), transmit, or retrieve data. If a device is brought to school, the adult dropping off the child will be asked to take the device home. If a device is found after the adult has left the building, it will be locked away safely until it can be returned to the adult picking up the child at dismissal time.