



# Our Lady of Mercy School Preschool Handbook 2024-2025



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[www.schoololom.org](http://www.schoololom.org)

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Our Lady of Mercy School! Mercy maintains a wonderful preschool program dedicated to nurturing our youngest learners in mind, body, and spirit. Our Catholic identity is the foundation of this program, and we value you, our parents, as our partners in this important educational journey.

This handbook outlines Archdiocesan policies, school regulations, and other items of importance to preschool students and parents. This document serves as a compliment to the school parent handbook and does not replace those policies. Please read both documents for a full representation of all school policies.

Each parent must sign and return a statement that she/he has received and read the parent guide and acknowledges the responsibilities outlined.

Any questions should be directed to Christine Castro, Preschool Director. We are here to assist you however needed. We look forward to a successful year of learning and growing with our students.

In the spirit of Mercy,

Christine Green  
Principal

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## MISSION STATEMENT

Our Lady of Mercy School is dedicated to creating a nurturing, inclusive, and challenging environment. With Christ as our model, we foster the spiritual, intellectual, moral, social, and physical development of each student. Our mission is to inspire our students to reach their full potential, to live with faith and integrity, and to share their unique gifts and talents with others.

**Be inspired. Be challenged. Be you.**

## GOVERNANCE AND LICENSING

OLOM Preschool is under the direction of the Archdiocese of Washington and is related to the Catholic Schools Office. OLOM Preschool is licensed by the State of Maryland's Department of Education.



## ADMISSIONS

Our Lady of Mercy School admits and provides services to all students who have reached the appropriate age.

### **Admissions Policy**

The order in which children may be admitted may be determined by the family's active participation in the parish community, as evidenced by the following:

- Sunday attendance at Eucharistic Liturgy
- Sharing of time and talent with regard to parish life and ministry
- Regular contributions through the use of offertory envelopes

Students may be accepted in the following order:

- Siblings of students presently enrolled or graduates of the school, with priority given to families with eligible students enrolled at OLOM
- Registered parishioners of OLOM Parish
- Students of families registered in other parishes not having a school
- Students of families registered in other Catholic parishes
- Non-Catholic students

Children entering PreK-3 and PreK-4 must be three or four respectively by the date determined by the State of Maryland.

We will support you and your child in meeting his or her full potential. In order to allow the fullest participation of all children, we encourage you to please consider sharing a copy of any existing IEP/IFSP to aid in planning.

**Archdiocesan Admissions & Non-Discrimination Policy:** The Archdiocese's Admissions & Non-Discrimination Policy can be found on the website of the Catholic Schools Office of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington at:

<https://adwcatholicschools.org/non-discriminationpolicy/>

### **Registration and Acceptance**

Registration is open in October and is done on a rolling basis. Please complete the registration on [TADS](#). When your application is complete, a decision letter will be sent to you.

### **Tuition and Fees**

All families are required to sign a Tuition Agreement through TADS. This is a contractual agreement with Our Lady of Mercy School. Responsible parties are asked to meet their financial obligations to the school promptly. The application and registration fees are non-refundable. The application fee is applied to tuition if the child is accepted and refunded if the child's application is denied. Tuition costs can be found on the school website. PreK tuition may be paid in 1, 2, 3 or 10 installments through the TADS tuition management system.



## CURRICULUM

### **PreK-3**

The focus of the PreK 3 class is primarily to promote the socio-emotional development of a student. Teachers address this goal by introducing the routine of a schedule, encouraging independence, and promoting positive peer interaction as students learn to share, ask questions, and be able to use their words to express their needs. Additionally, the teachers begin to form learning foundations in the students by exposing them to a host of activities that focus on the Catholic faith, language and literacy, math skills, wellness, science, social studies, and more.

The children participate in the following specials: religion, art, library, physical education, Mass, music/Spanish, technology, and science adventures.



### **PreK-4**

Mercy's prekindergarten follows the [ADW academic standards](#) which align vertically with the standards for the primary grades. The program provides instruction, activities, and recreation that promote physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and language development within a nurturing Catholic environment.

Teachers help children discover that learning is enjoyable through songs, games, movement, arts and crafts, cooking, technology, independent play, field trips, and science experiments. Teachers also expose students to the Catholic faith through Bible stories, prayers, attending weekly mass, activities and projects based on religious holidays, and by encouraging family prayer time.

The classrooms are self-contained with small group instruction for both math and language arts. Instruction in Spanish, art, music, library, physical education, science adventures and technology is provided by specially trained teachers.

PreK-4 teachers use the "Wonders" Curriculum, McGraw-Hill Education to guide instruction. The curriculum is structured to balance developmentally appropriate skills with academic standards in the areas of social and emotional development, oral language, math, and literacy. Teachers supplement this curriculum with interactive centers, work stations, independent activities, and group activities that reinforce the skills presented. Teachers use assessment checklists to monitor student progress and to determine needed support or enrichment.

**Screen Time Policy**

A child 3 years and older may not be permitted to view more than 30 minutes of age-appropriate, educational passive technology per week.

Md. Code Regs. 13A.16.09.01(C)(3).

**Parent/School Communication**

Assessment of children's progress towards developmental goals are available for PreK 4 in and January and June. Additional conferences may be held during the school year as needed.

Parents/family members are invited and encouraged to attend conferences with the teachers. Parents will be notified of conferences in our weekly classroom newsletter.

Our Lady of Mercy School's newsletter, **Mercy Matters**, is published on a weekly basis and is distributed electronically. Copies are also available in the school office.

Additionally, school wide information and announcements are shared via Constant Contact emails.





## GENERAL INFORMATION

### **School Hours**

The Preschool follows the Mercy School Calendar.

- PreK-3 and PreK-4 classes begin at 8:00 a.m.
- PreK-3 half day and PreK-4 half day students are dismissed at 12:00 p.m.
- PreK-3 and PreK-4 full day students **with no siblings** are dismissed at 2:45 p.m.
- PreK-3 and PreK-4 full day students **with siblings** are dismissed at 3:00 p.m.

### **School Calendar**

The Preschool Program will follow the same calendar as Our Lady of Mercy School.

### **Morning Drop-Off**

- PreK-3 and PreK-4 students may arrive at 7:30 a.m. PreK-3 drop-off is at the PreK-3 classroom entrance. PreK-4 drop-off is near the church entrance fireplace.
- PreK-3 and PreK-4 classes begin at 8:00 a.m. Early morning consists of free time and centers.

### **Afternoon Pick-Up**

- PreK-3 and PreK-4 students with siblings will be in the regular 3:00 p.m. carpool.
- PreK-3 and PreK-4 students without siblings will be dismissed at 2:45 p.m. at the church bell tower.
- **Half day students** in PreK-3 will be dismissed at 12:00 p.m. outside the PreK-3 classroom.
- **Half day students** in PreK-4 will be dismissed at 12:00 p.m. from the church bell tower.

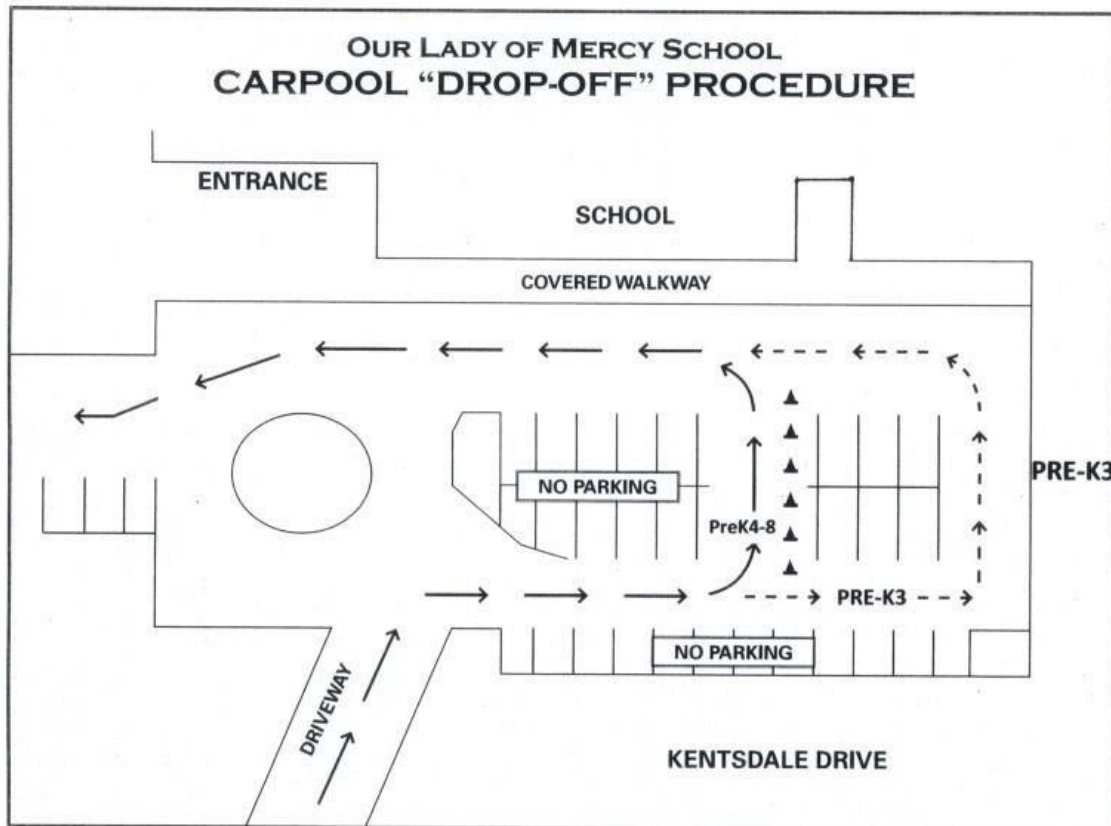
### Morning Carpool Procedure (for students without siblings)

#### PreK-3

1. Enter off Kentsdale Drive and proceed cautiously up the driveway toward the circle.
2. Veer right and proceed straight to the far end of the parking lot (past the cones) and pull up in front of the PreK-3 room (brick area adjacent to gym). A teacher/ aide will receive your child and ask a parent/guardian to sign the child in.
3. Children will be walked into the classroom by a teacher, aide, or patrol.
4. To leave campus, proceed to join K-8 drop off line along the covered walkway.
5. Wait for cars in front of you to unload, and stay in line as you exit the parking lot. **DO NOT PASS!** Go past the church and exit down the driveway.

#### PreK-4

1. Enter off Kentsdale Drive, follow the school carpool line, pulling up near the fire pit adjacent to the church.
2. Students will be greeted by PreK-4 assistant teachers at their cars; please sign in with the assistant teacher.
3. To leave the campus, cautiously proceed down the driveway to exit.



**Afternoon Carpool Procedure** (for students without older siblings)

## PreK-3

1. Parents of students attending the half-day program should **arrive promptly at 12:00 p.m.**
2. Pull up in front of the PreK-3 room (brick area adjacent to gym). Aides will bring your child out to you.
3. **Cars must be off the parking lot by 12:10 p.m.** Late pick-ups must park in the lower lot and walk up to the school entrance to pick up their child(ren) from the main office.
4. **In an event of a whole school half day schedule, PreK-3 dismissal is at 11:45 a.m. Cars must be off the parking lot by 12:00 p.m.**
5. Parents of students attending the full day program should arrive promptly at 2:45 p.m. The teacher and teacher's aide will be supervising the children at the church bell tower. Children may be picked up at this location and loaded on the passenger side, or parents may park their car and pick up their child(ren) at the church bell tower. Parents must sign their child(ren) out with the teacher prior to being dismissed. Cars must be off the parking lot by 2:55 p.m. Late pick-ups must park in the lower lot and walk up to the school entrance to pick up their child(ren) from the Kennedy Room (aftercare).

## PreK-4

1. **Parents of students attending the half-day program should arrive promptly at 12:00 p.m.** The teacher or teacher's aide will be supervising the children at the church bell tower. Children may be picked up at this location and loaded on the passenger side, or parents may park their car and pick up their child(ren) at the church bell tower. Parents must sign their child(ren) out with the teacher prior to being dismissed. **Cars must be off the parking lot by 12:10 p.m.** Late pick-ups must park in the lower lot and walk up to the school entrance to pick up their child(ren) from the main office.
2. Parents of students attending the full day program should arrive promptly at 2:45 p.m. The teacher and teacher's aide will be supervising the children at the church bell tower. Children may be picked up at this location and loaded on the passenger side, or parents may park their car and pick up their child(ren) at the bell tower. Parents must sign their child(ren) out with the teacher prior to being dismissed. Cars must be off the parking lot by 2:55 p.m. Late pick-ups must park in the lower lot and walk up to the school entrance to pick up their child(ren) from the Kennedy Room (aftercare).
3. **In an event of a whole school half day schedule, PreK-4 dismissal is at 11:45 a.m. by the church bell tower. Cars must be off the parking lot by 12:00 p.m.**

### **School Closing and Delays**

In the event of inclement weather, Our Lady of Mercy School follows all directives given for Montgomery County Public Schools. These are announced on local radio and TV stations, and through Constant Contact.

When there is a two-hour delayed opening (for all grades), our school will open at 10:00 a.m. with morning drop off beginning at 9:30 a.m. If Montgomery County announces that schools will close early, we will adjust our dismissal time accordingly and **there will be no After Care.**

In the event that our school has a scheduled 12:15 p.m. dismissal and it is announced that Montgomery County Public Schools are opening two hours late, Mercy **will be closed.** Should emergency situations arise that effect only Our Lady of Mercy School, parents will be contacted by means of our emergency contact system, Rediker/text, email and/or the school website.

### **Security**

During school hours, parents, guardians and visitors must report to the receptionist to sign-in and receive a visitor's badge. Please ring the buzzer for entrance into the school. Parents and guardians must have a pre-scheduled appointment with a teacher before entering the teacher's classroom.

### **Absences**

If a child is absent from school, please call or send an email to his/her teacher.

### **Lunch**

Lunches may be brought from home. We strongly recommend that a nutritious lunch be planned for the student excluding candy or high sugar drinks.

For a fee, full-day students have the option to purchase a well-balanced hot lunch, including white or chocolate milk, provided by the county, and may be ordered up to five days per week. The [Hot Lunch Program](#) is provided by a local caterer, Vignola, and purchases are made in advance on-line.

**Snacks**

Children are to bring their own water bottle and a morning snack clearly marked with their name. Please limit snacks to two items (such as cheese, apples, etc). Parents are strongly encouraged to pack a healthy snack and avoid items with a high sugar content.

**Expectations for Children's Behavior**

As members of a Catholic, caring community, the children will be expected to respect teachers, each other, the materials, and the environment.

**Discipline Policy**

Preschool classrooms use a positive approach to provide a safe, comfortable, and nurturing environment for all students. Teachers focus on positive behaviors of students and reinforce those behaviors as often as possible. Teachers encourage students to use their words when disagreements with another child occur and help facilitate conversation between students. When disruptive behavior arises, teachers use redirection and set clear limits as a strategy to focus on the desired behavior and replace that misbehavior with a positive one. Redirection may involve verbal, physical, verbal with a visual cue, and redirection of attention to a positive model. These methods can help students stay safe, develop patience, and foster the child's ability to become self-disciplined. These will also help children reflect on their behavior and problem solve solutions to conflict.

Disciplinary measures shall be clear and understandable to the child, shall be consistent, and shall be explained to the child before and at the time of any disciplinary action.

Children will be given choices as a way to encourage positive behavior. Expectations are developmentally appropriate for the age of the children.

Classrooms have clear visual rules that are posted for the children as reminders of expectations.

Classroom rules will be discussed as a whole class during the first week of school for students to understand the expectations in preschool.

**Field Trips (PreK-4)**

Throughout the year, field trips are planned to complement classroom instruction. Participation is expected, as these trips correspond to the curriculum. In order for a student to participate, a field trip and medical release form must be completed and signed by parents/guardians. These forms, along with any applicable fees, should be submitted to the school as indicated. The office is only able to accept checks made payable to Our Lady of Mercy School in order to cover the cost of the trips. The cost of each trip is budgeted on full participation; therefore, if a student is absent on the day of the activity, the money is not refunded. Students are to abide by all school rules and regulations while on field trips. In order to be a chaperone, parents must complete the [VIRTUS training](#) with the required background check and have their fingerprints done.

**PreK-3** students must be accompanied by their parent/guardian/chaperone on all field trips.

**Class Parties and Birthdays**

If you would like to provide snacks for all the children on your child's birthday, please let the staff know ahead of time. In an effort to maintain a strong academic program, classroom birthday parties are not allowed. Parents may send in muffins, cupcakes or cookies (no cake) for their child's class. Information about student allergies is available from the teachers.

In keeping with the spirit of our Catholic community, and to foster sensitivity to the feelings of others, party invitations are not to be distributed during school unless the entire class or all boys/girls are included.



### **Emergencies/Safety**

The OLOM Crisis Plan meets the Standards of the Archdiocese of Washington as well as the Guidelines set forth by the Montgomery County Police and Fire Departments. Any person in the school during the drill must participate along with students and teachers.

With the children's safety in mind, it is most important that the parent/guardian fill out an emergency card, and then adhere to the instructions given.

1. One of the most important regulations concerns the child's leaving the premises. Parents or guardians should always notify staff and sign the child out before taking him or her from the school grounds.
2. Transportation Permission: Parents/guardians of every student must complete an [Archdiocese of Washington Transportation Permission Form](#) [ADW policy, 3546]. This form indicates the method/s by which the student will be transported to/from school each day. Parents/guardians must list the names and contact information for each person permitted to pick-up the students.
3. Changes in Transportation Plans: If a student is to be released to a person who is not listed on the transportation form, a written note, signed and dated by the parents/guardians must be hand delivered, or emailed to the teacher before 11:30 a.m.
4. Personal addresses and phone numbers (home, work, and cell) must always be kept current.
5. Prompt pick-up is expected. If you are running late, please call so that your child does not worry. If necessary, your child will be sent to After Care, and you will be charged accordingly.

### **Crisis Plan**

In accordance with ADW Policy 3581, Our Lady of Mercy has an emergency plan in place should the need arise. This plan is updated regularly in consultation with the School Advisory Board and ADW Catholic Schools Office. If there is a school emergency, parents will be notified through the School Reach emergency contact system. Please note that only those individuals with emergency forms on file with the school office shall be notified [ADW Policy 3545]. Copies of the crisis plan are available from the office for parent review. Comments about this plan may be provided during the first two weeks of the school year. [ADW Policy 3581]. If needed, Mercy's reunification area is the **German International School, 8617 Chateau Drive, Potomac, 20854.**

**Fire Drills**

Fire drills are required by law, and all students must participate. When the first alarm sounds, students are required to proceed promptly in single file and total silence to the exit appointed for that particular classroom or location. Books, backpacks, jackets, and other personal items are not to be retrieved before exiting the classroom.

**School Security/Visitors**

For the safety and protection of your children, all outside doors will be closed and locked during school hours. Visitors must ring the doorbell at the main entrance for admittance. We require all visitors, including parents and volunteers, to sign in at the school office. Security cameras are in use.

**Child Protection Policy**

All parents who intend to participate in any activity with the students must be in full compliance with the ADW Child Protection Policy. Examples of contact include: volunteering at school in any capacity, i.e., chaperoning a field trip, assisting at the book fair, working in a classroom, chaperoning a class party, volunteering at field day or supervising students at an event. This mandatory process must be completed BEFORE you will be able to work with children. Therefore, we encourage you to get a packet of information from the school office and follow the attached directions as soon as possible. In order to be a volunteer, parents must complete the [VIRTUS training](#) with the required background check and have their fingerprints done.

**Procedures for Illness or Accident**

Please email your child's teacher and Mrs. Amanda Williams ([awilliams@olom.org](mailto:awilliams@olom.org)), our school nurse, to notify them when your child is sick.





## **Immunizations**

The Archdiocesan policy [ADW Policy 3514] requiring immunizations as a condition of admission for all students is based on Catholic social and moral teachings concerning the sanctity of human life and serious concern for the health, safety, and well-being of students, staff, and the common good. It is mandated that all children entering school ARE REQUIRED to show proof of CURRENT immunizations using the [Archdiocese of Washington Immunization Policy Acknowledgement Form](#). Students may not begin school unless all immunizations are current.

Children must also have a [Medical History Form](#) on file signed by the pediatrician. If you need a form, they are available from the school nurse.

1. A health record will be maintained on each student.
2. Our goal is to maintain a healthy environment for everyone in our program. If your child is ill to the extent that it endangers the health of others, it will be necessary for you to make other arrangements for his/her care. Should your child become ill while in attendance at the school, you will be notified to pick up the child.

In the event that a student is believed to have a serious communicable disease such as strep, influenza, chicken pox, measles, mono, etc., the school nurse and the preschool director should be informed immediately of the diagnosis and kept informed by the parents/guardians about the progress and treatment.

For the protection of everyone involved, your child will not be allowed to stay at school in the following circumstances:

- Fever (100 degrees or higher) in the past 24 hours
- Diarrhea in the past 24 hours
- Vomiting in the past 24 hours
- Chills
- Sore throat
- Strep Throat (must have been taking antibiotic for at least 24 Hours before returning to the school)
- Head lice- unless the chills has been treated according to the nurse's or doctors instruction.
- Bad cold, with very runny nose or bad cough, especially if it has kept the child awake at night.

Parents may be called to pick-up their child if the teacher makes a determination that the child is not well enough to be in school. We ask that you respond promptly in such cases.

### **Medication**

All prescription and non-prescription medication is to be labeled with the student's name and specific instructions for administering the medication. Medication is to be sent to the nurse's office where it will be administered by a nurse. There is an [Archdiocesan Form](#) (ADW Form 8) which can be obtained from the school nurse that must be completed and signed by you and your pediatrician for prescription and over the counter medications.

Phone requests to give a child medication are not permitted.

Students are not permitted to keep medication with them (including Chapstick).

### **Allergies**

Please make us aware of any/all allergies or sensitivities your child may have; animal, food, environmental.

### **Toilet Training**

It is expected that each child enrolled in the Our Lady of Mercy Preschool Program is already toilet trained. A change of uniform and underwear will be needed (put in a large Ziploc bag and label with child's name) for accidents that occur. A 3-year-old wearing pull-ups is not considered potty trained. While occasional potty accidents will happen, children who persistently have potty accidents will be excused from further attendance until they are completely trained.

### **Clothing**

Please dress your child appropriately for the weather and be sure to put sunscreen on him/her before he/she comes to school. All items that your child brings to school should be marked with his/her first and last names.

Boys

Winter

- Light blue gold shirt with Mercy logo, short or long sleeved
- Navy uniform pants (elastic waist bands are fine)
- Navy cardigan uniform sweater, Mercy gym sweatshirt (not hooded), Flynn O'Hara full zip – Navy only
- Navy or white crew socks
- Black, tan, navy, or brown sneakers

Optional for fall or spring

- Navy uniform walking shorts with the light blue golf shirt

## Girls

### Winter

- White golf shirt (no logo needed) short or long sleeved, white Peter pan collar uniform blouse, or white turtleneck
- Blue plaid jumper, no more than 2” above the knee, from Flynn O’Hara only
- Navy cardigan uniform sweater, Mercy gym sweatshirt (not hooded), Flynn O’Hara full zip – Navy only
- Navy knee socks, white or navy crew socks, navy tights or leggings (straight only)
- Black, brown, tan or navy sneakers

### Optional for fall and spring

- Navy uniform walking shorts with the white golf shirt



## **RIGHT TO AMEND THE HANDBOOK**

The pastor and principal retain the right to amend the Parent/Student Handbook and/or the Preschool Handbook as needed. Parents will be given notification if changes are made. This handbook is in effect until it is superseded by any amendments.

**PARENT GUIDE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I have read the Our Lady of Mercy School 2024-2025 Preschool Handbook, as well as Mercy's Parent/Student Handbook, and understand the responsibilities outlined. I also understand that Our Lady of Mercy School reserves the right to amend this handbook. I will be notified of the changes in a timely manner.

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_