



**Our Lady of Victory Catholic School
Preschool**

Where Faith, Fun and Learning
Come Together

Parent Handbook
Updated 2024

OLVCS Preschool
810 Westerly Parkway
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(814) 238-6616
<https://www.olvcatholicsschool.org>

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Important Phone Numbers

Our Lady of Victory Catholic School Preschool	(814)238-6616
Our Lady of Victory Catholic School	(814)238-1592
Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church	(814)237-7832

We Love OLV Preschool

We love OLV Preschool,
We've made lots of new friends!
We've learned our letters and numbers too.
Look, I colored a picture for you!
Let us root, root, root for our preschool!
Everyday is so cool.
Let us tell our Moms and our Dads
That we love preschool!

Dear OLVCS Preschool Family,

Welcome to another exciting year at Our Lady of Victory Catholic School Preschool! It is a blessing to serve you and your family . At OLVCS Preschool we believe early education founded in Catholic values helps children to know and love God. We are happy you are a part of our preschool family.

Starting school is a big step for children and their parents. Hopefully, this handbook will help answer some of the questions you may have and be of assistance as the school year progresses.

Thank you for taking the time to read these notes concerning our program. If you have any questions or concerns during the course of the year, do not hesitate to get in touch with your child's teacher or the Preschool Administrator.

OLVCS Preschool Philosophy

At Our Lady of Victory Catholic School Preschool, we recognize that while children develop at somewhat predictable rates, each child is an individual.

The school's staff is committed to providing a secure and nurturing environment where a child can grow socially, physically, emotionally and spiritually. We believe that preschool should be a time for creative exploration, discovery and learning through activities which are first and foremost fun for the child.

Goals of OLVCS Preschool

1. To encourage the development of self-sufficiency and self-confidence in the child through the participation in age appropriate activities.
2. To encourage the development of social skills such as sharing, behavioral limits, respect for property, and the well-being of others in a group situation.
3. To provide activities which help develop and extend verbalization, language and cognitive skills, such as math, science, and creative problem solving.
4. To provide a caring environment in which the child adjusts to new situations, experiences, and people at his/her own pace.
5. To provide a variety of multi-sensory activities.
6. To introduce children to the love of God as it presents itself in the world around them.
7. To introduce children to the teachings of Christ and to show, by example, the ways in which these are integrated into our daily lives.
8. To foster acceptance of and respect for the differences among cultures, nationalities, and age groups.
9. To encourage the child to accept and respect their own feelings, and to guide the child to express these feelings in ways which do not cause harm to themselves or others.
10. Programs and activities are planned according to developmental level and/or age appropriate skills and interests of the children, upcoming liturgical and secular holidays and special events, available materials, equipment, and community resources, skills and interests of staff and parents, special concerns and goals of staff and parents, and gospel values that instill the teachings of Christ within the hearts of our young children.

General Policies

Admissions

All children must adhere to the following birthdate requirements for each program:

- 3 Year Old Program- Children must turn three years old on or before August 31st of the school year for which they are enrolling.
- Mixed Age Developmental Program- Children must turn three years old on or before August 31st of the school year for which they are enrolling but may not turn five years old before February 1st of the following year.
- 4 Year Old Program-Children must turn four years old on or before August 31st of the school year for which they are enrolling.
- PreK Program- Children must turn five years old on or before December 31st of the school year for which they are enrolling.

All children are expected to be fully potty-trained prior to enrollment. A child is considered fully potty trained when they can:

- Use the toilet without accidents during the day
- Communicate their need to use the toilet
- Wipe themselves
- Pull up and down their own clothing

We understand that even those children who have been potty trained for a while still have occasional accidents. Bathroom accidents will be documented with incident reports. Small accidents will be attended to by preschool staff, but in situations where children may need extensive help to clean themselves, a parent may be called for assistance. Frequent accidents however, are a sign that a child is not fully potty trained and enrollment may need to be reviewed until the occurrences decrease.

Registration and Enrollment

Priority registration for the following school year begins during Catholic Schools Week in January/February and runs through the end of the month. Because we have limited spots in each age program, registrations are accepted and positions are filled based on the following priorities and in the order in which they are received:

- Be a currently registered preschool student registered at OLVCS Preschool
- Have a sibling registered at OLVCS PreK-8th grade
- Be a member of OLV or Good Shepherd Parish
- Be a member of another Catholic parish

After the priority registration period, positions are filled in the order in which the registrations are received. No age programs will exceed class size limits. In the event a class is full, new registrants will be placed on a waiting list.

A one-time non-refundable registration fee will be required upon initial entry into the OLVCS Preschool Program.

Nondiscrimination Policy

Our Lady of Victory Catholic School Preschool does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national or ethnic origin in administration of its education policies, admissions

policies, scholarship program and other school-administered programs. Programs shall be made accessible to eligible persons with disabilities through the most practical and economically feasible methods available. These methods include, but are not limited to, equipment redesign and the provision of aides.

School Information File

Students' school information file is kept confidential via our online registration and enrollment program, Finalsite. All student file information will be completed online and pertinent information accessible only to designated staff.

Emergency Contact/Parental Consent Form

It is vital for us to have a current "Emergency Contact/Parental Consent Form" in your child's school file. Classroom teachers also keep a copy of this form in your child's classroom. Should a child have any type of accident or become ill, all attempts will be made to notify the parents. If they cannot be reached within 15 minutes (or sooner in the case of an extreme emergency), school staff will contact any of the persons listed on the Emergency Contact/Parental Consent Form. Please keep this list up to date and ONLY include contacts who are within a 30 minute travel distance.

Tuition and Payments

Preschool tuition is a flat monthly rate based on a ten month (Sept.-June) pay period. No adjustments are made to child absence from school. Tuition payments are due by the 6th of each month. Late fees of up to 5% per day may be incurred.

Our Lady of Victory Catholic School has a history of working in good faith with families regarding tuition payments, but families are responsible for communications with the school, committing to a payment plan that is acceptable to all parties, and fulfilling the terms of the approved payment plan.

All families must enroll in FACTS, an online tuition management system (<https://online.factsmgt.com>) and are responsible for paying the annual FACTS enrollment fee. Through this system, tuition payments may be made by credit card, debit card, or check. No payments will be collected at the school. During preschool enrollment, parents/guardians will be given an OLVCS specific link for FACTS enrollment. Preschool registration will not be considered complete until FACTS enrollment is completed.

Those who would like to pay above the minimum tuition fee may make a voluntary contribution. This contribution is tax deductible. Please review the following OLVCS Tuition Collection Policy:

1. In general, there are two tuition rates for morning programs: Catholic parishioner rate and Non-Catholic parishioner rate. To be eligible for the Catholic parishioners rate, parents/guardians must identify their Catholic parish. OLVCS bookkeeping will verify through each parish.
2. Families who have more than one child enrolled at OLVCS Preschool may receive the discounted rate of 25% off tuition for the second child.

3. Late notices are sent to each family approximately two weeks after the due date. A late fee will be assessed on all payments made after the due date. Unpaid late notices will be followed up with phone calls.
4. For families withdrawing students before the end of the school year, families will pay for each month the student is enrolled.
5. ESP payments will be charged at the end of the month that was attended.
6. If a child is not picked up at the end of his or her scheduled program, a late pick up fee will be charged separately at the rate of \$20/hr.
7. Refunds will not be issued for absences, school closings, or student withdrawal from the program.

With respect to making tuition payments, the administration will make a concerted effort to work with families, including those with financial need. However, if a family does not pay an outstanding balance after multiple reminders by OLVCS, the administration reserves the right to send the unpaid balance for tuition and other charges to a collection agency. Failure to review an online account does not constitute a valid reason for not paying tuition on time. Further, current students with unpaid balances may not be eligible for re-enrollment in the following school year, at the discretion of the school administration.

All questions regarding Preschool tuition or Extended School Program tuition should be directed to the OLVCS Bookkeeper or Preschool Administrator.

Student Tuition Assistance Policy

As a faith community, Our Lady of Victory Catholic School values children and families of all backgrounds regardless of their ability to pay. We create and maintain an inclusive environment by supporting and valuing families.

Tuition assistance funds are available to help qualifying families that need assistance. Funds are replenished through personal and congregational gifts, Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program, and/or OLVCS Preschool fundraising activities. In order to be eligible for financial assistance, your financial application through Simple Tuition solutions must be completed and verified. You may begin applying through <https://app.simpletuitionsolutions.org/>.

General Information

DHS Certification

OLVCS Preschool is a licensed facility under the Department of Human Services. While we are not a daycare, our program adheres to the regulations as set forth by PA Code/Title 55/Chapter 3270 for Child Care Centers.

Staffing

All teachers are certified in Early Childhood, Elementary Education or a related field. Additionally, all staff are required to participate in annual ongoing professional development.

All teachers, aides and classroom volunteers complete the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Protecting God's Children seminar and Mandated Reporter Training which aids in the prevention and detection of child abuse and neglect. The state of Pennsylvania requires that all members of preschools are mandated reporters of any evidence of child abuse/neglect. We are therefore obligated to report to the State any suspected cases of child neglect or abuse.

All teachers, aides and classroom volunteers are also required to provide the following:

- PA Child Abuse Clearance (Act 151)
- PA Criminal History Check (Act 34)
- Arrest/Conviction Report (Act 24)
- Fingerprint Background Check
- National Sex Offender Registry Clearance

Any questions regarding employee/staff requirements can be directed to our Youth protection Program Coordinator at youthprotection@olvcs.org.

When appropriate under staff supervision, we incorporate local university and high school students into our classroom environment.

Illness and Medication

Should your child become ill while at school, every effort will be made to contact you. In the event that we are unable to reach either parent, we will contact the people listed on the Emergency Contact/Parental Consent Form. Children who become ill at school are expected to be picked up within 30 minutes. Please keep all names and numbers on this form current.

Children may not attend or return to school if they have any of the following symptoms:

- A fever of 100.4 or higher within the last 24 hours without medication
- Vomiting or diarrhea within 24 hours prior to school arrival
- Running nose with thick discolored mucus discharge
- Any present persistent cough that they are not able to independently cover with their arm
- Shortness of breath
- Overly tired, fussy or cranky

- Pink eye, strep throat, chickenpox or any other communicable disease
- Live lice or nits

The main reasons to keep your child home are that an illness can:

- Prevent your child from participating comfortably in activities
- Make them need more care than staff members can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children
- Pose a risk of spread of harmful disease to others

Please notify the office of your child's absence and indicate if it is due to illness so that we can pass on any incidents of communicable illness to other families. We will make every effort to notify parents of any outbreaks of communicable diseases (chickenpox, measles, head lice, strep infections, etc.) on a timely basis. In such cases, confidentiality will be maintained.

For the health and safety of all children and staff members of our program, any children who exhibit one or more of these symptoms while attending school will be considered ill and their parents will be contacted.

A detailed health and safety plan is available on the OLVCS website.

Annual Physicals

An initial health and immunization report, no more than one year prior to enrollment, is required upon entry to the preschool program. An updated annual physical report and medical plan are required each year in attendance.

Medication and Care Plans

Upon enrollment, parents should indicate if their child has an allergy. Parents will be required to submit an Allergy Action Plan or Care Plan as prescribed by their physician. Regarding medication:

- Staff members are only permitted to dispense medication as prescribed in an Allergy Action Plan. Medication must be physician prescribed with parental written permission. All physician prescribed medication must be in the original container- a physician Permission to Dispense Medication form can be obtained at the office.
- Staff members may not administer medications for any other reason- please do not send cough drops, cough syrup, Tylenol, etc. to school.

Health and Safety

Should an emergency arise which requires immediate medical action and treatment (i.e. calling the physician and/or Emergency Medical Services), such action will be taken and parents will be notified as soon as possible. Mount Nittany Medical Center is designated as our emergency treatment center.

Accident/Incident report forms must be completed by the school in the event of injury to a child while under school care. The original report is sent home to the parents and a copy is placed in the child's school file.

It is critical that our records are kept up-to-date- should any change during the year, especially information regarding emergency contacts, work, home addresses or phone numbers, health status, the office must be notified immediately.

Behavior and Discipline

Our philosophy is to work with and guide your child through modeling positive behaviors, giving clear directions and encouraging and reinforcing positive behaviors.

Through positive social interactions, interventions and modeling, we help children learn to express emotions in positive, non-violent ways; use words to express feelings and desires; respect others' feelings by developing empathy and compassion; take responsibility for their choices and resulting consequences; learn forgiveness and understand that God loves us no matter what we do.

Behavior concerns are dealt with confidentially and in collaboration with parents, teachers and the administrator. If you have questions regarding behavior issues, please address your child's teacher immediately in a private setting. Your child's teacher should always be the first person with whom you discuss any concerns about your child.

At no time does OLVCS Preschool utilize physical or verbal threats or actions on any child for any reason.

Every situation will be handled on an individual basis. Resources such as counselors and intervention programs or strategies will be willingly explored by OLVCS Preschool staff if deemed appropriate and necessary, temporarily or permanently.

In the event a child repeatedly exhibits a behavior difficulty to the extent that it poses direct harm to other staff or children, causes undue burden on staffing, or fundamentally alters the nature of the program and/or the quality of care given to other children attending the program, then the administration of Our Lady of Victory Catholic Preschool reserves the right to have the child removed from the OLVCS Preschool program.

Inclement Weather

In the event of school cancellation, delayed opening or early dismissals, all announcements will be made via SchoolMessenger automated phone system. Note, that in the event of inclement weather or emergency school closing, calls can come as early as 5:30AM.

Our general policy is as follows:

If/when OLVCS makes the decision to cancel or close school early due to inclement weather, we will also close or dismiss both the Preschool and Extended School Day programs early.

In the event of the decision to delay school starting time, we will run our program according to the following schedule:

Student Drop Off: 9:30AM-10AM (no early drop off option)

Preschool Program: 10AM-12PM
Extended School Day: 12PM-3PM

It is also possible that OLVCS Preschool may operate under a closure, delayed opening/early dismissal schedule separate from that of OLVCS K-8th grade.

We ask that parents closely monitor weather websites/apps and TV stations and plan accordingly should there be any questions or concerns about the current weather situation.

Due to the number of students involved, we are unable to contact families on an individual basis once a decision to close early, cancel or delay opening has been made.

It is the parent's responsibility to decide if they wish to travel during inclement weather conditions in order to get their child to our facility should we make the decision to open. At no time would we wish to jeopardize the safety of our families and staff.

Emergency Situation Information

Should it become necessary for any reason to relocate the children to another facility, parents will be notified utilizing the most efficient means possible- phone or public communication.

During any emergency situation including weather, children will only be released to those individuals listed on the Emergency Contact Form.

It may be determined that the safest response would be to shelter the children within the facility during an emergency situation. The facility is equipped with supplies and equipment to continue providing care for an extended period.

It is critical that families keep all contact information up to date with the school office.

Fire Drills

In the event of a fire on the premises the facility fire system is set to automatically trigger the audible/visual alarm system within the building as well as alert the local fire department.

In the event the system does not automatically trigger these responses the system can be manually activated within the facility which will then activate the signal to the local fire department. Once the audible/visual signal has been activated staff will follow posted evacuation procedures.

Fire drills will be held monthly with the timing of the drills to be varied.

Lockdown/Lockout/Evacuation/Shelter Drills

OLVCS Preschool has adopted the Standard Response Protocol- a nationwide emergency plan that has been developed to provide consistency in emergency situations among schools, police and first responders.

Signs outlining emergency situation protocol are displayed throughout the facility, including every classroom, to help serve as reference points in the event of emergency for the benefit of students, staff and visitors to the school.

Students are introduced to the terminology and procedures as part of school safety practices during regular classroom instruction.

Standard Response Protocol drills are held annually and families will be notified prior to the drill.

Safety Training

All OLVCS staff will receive yearly in-service training with local police personnel in emergency preparedness. As part of the training, they will discuss and practice possible strategies for emergency situations for the safety of all students and staff in the facility. In addition, all preschool staff will receive annual/bi-annual training in the areas of fire safety and Infant/Pediatric First Aid/CPR.

Keeping Up-to-Date and Informed

At the beginning of the school year, you will receive a calendar of upcoming important dates for the entire year. These listings will include various special events, school holiday and vacation days and any changes in the regular school routine.

Our website is also a valuable source of information for both school and program specific activities and announcements. <https://www.olvcatholicschool.org/Domain/13>

Each month, your child's program teacher will send home a classroom calendar and/or newsletter which will include important dates, events plus specific announcements and/or requests.

The OLVCS Principal sends out a Weekly Update via email each week with important dates, reminders and information on what's happening at OLVCS PreK-8th grade. Please make sure your current email is on file.

Program Information

OLVCS Preschool and Extended School Programs

Our Lady of Victory Catholic School Preschool provides an educational, developmentally appropriate Christ-centered environment for children three through five years of age. Several program options are available.

- September- May Preschool Program classes operated 9AM-12PM
- September- May Extended School Program (ESP): ESP operates Monday through Friday 7:30AM-8:30AM and 12PM-3PM on days that classes are in session

Attendance

Continuity and routine are important aspects in anyone's life. Since most of our activities are “building blocks” which interlock with each other, it is important that your child comes to school on a regular basis. If your child is absent from preschool for any reason, we would appreciate as much notification as possible. An email, note or phone call will help keep your child up to date with our activities.

Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival

Parents/guardians will enter from the Westerly Pkwy entrance and circle in the rear of OLVCS Preschool at their designated drop off times. A staff member will meet your child at your vehicle each morning and escort them inside. The assigned drop off times are as follows:

- Extended School Program: 7:30AM-8:30AM (only)
- Preschool Class Program: 8:45AM-9AM

Before each session, teachers and their assistants prepare for that day's activities. Therefore, while promptness is urged, please be considerate as teachers finish their preparations.

At no time should a child be permitted to enter the building unaccompanied. All personal items must be left in the Coat Room areas. Please remember to label your child's name on **anything** sent to school.

Dismissal

Morning dismissal for all classes is at 12PM. Parents/guardians may enter the parking lot in the same manner as drop off no earlier than 11:40AM.

At no time will we release a child to another parent/adult without permission to do so from the child's parent/guardian. If a child is being picked up by a person not known to the staff, we reserve the right to request identifying information including a photo ID.

We ask that parents respect our drop off and dismissal times by arriving promptly at their designated time. Should you run late for dismissal time PLEASE call the school office to alert us. Any child not picked up within fifteen minutes of regular morning dismissal time will be brought to our Extended School Program classrooms where they can be safe until you arrive and you will be charged a late fee of \$20 per hour.

Please be respectful of our strict 3PM closing time. A late fee of \$20.00 plus \$5.00 for each additional 5 minutes late will automatically be applied for a child picked up after 3PM. After three late occurrences, your child will not be permitted to attend the Extended School Program.

Dressing for School

Play and preschool are often messy. Therefore, please keep that in mind when dressing your child for school. Sneakers and play clothes are most appropriate. Sandals, rain boots or other ill fitting slip-on type shoes are not recommended for wear at school.

Please note that we also go outside EVERY morning except in the cases of rain or extreme cold. Sweaters, jackets and long pants in the Fall and Spring and heavy coats, hats and mittens are a Winter necessity.

We also require that an extra set of clothing, including socks and underwear, be sent to school should a change be necessary. Please pack season appropriate extra clothes in a Ziplock bag to be kept in your child's backpack or cubby. We will send bags home as the weather changes and children grow to be replaced with more appropriate clothes.

Transitions

Our Lady of Victory Catholic School Preschool will do its best to make your child's transition into preschool a positive and exciting experience. OLVCS Preschool will work with your family to ensure the smoothest possible transition occurs as new routines and new faces are introduced.

Prior to your child's first day at preschool, you shall have an opportunity to tour the facility, meet the staff, meet your child's friends and communicate your expectations. Meet the Teacher sessions and an OLVCS PreK-8 Back to School picnic will be scheduled by the preschool prior to the first day of school.

Transitioning children from one classroom to another the following year is as critical a time as when a child first enrolls in our program. There is a partnership needed between the child's family, the sending teachers and the receiving teachers that must be in place to afford an effective transition. Children will be placed in the next classroom based on a combination of factors; age, developmental readiness, DHS regulations, space availability and at what age your child will enter kindergarten.

At OLVCS Preschool each program builds consecutively. Throughout the year each class will create opportunities to interact with younger classes to help facilitate future progression through the program. The activities include, but are not limited to, shared specials activities, integrated classroom visit days and preschool-wide programming.

Parents/guardians will complete, on an annual basis, an updated Family Child Form that will be distributed to the child's teacher prior to the start of school. This form will indicate

educational goals the family has for the child, concerns the family may have regarding school and other important information about the child that the parents/guardians believe will be helpful for the teacher in a successful transition.

OLVCS Preschool seeks to minimize changes of teachers and staff during the school year so that children and families can enjoy the comfort and security of a familiar face and consistent learning environment. If a change in staff is necessary, we will prepare children and families to ease the transition.

In the event of a teacher/staff change, affected families will be notified. When possible, job openings will be filled from qualified substitutes and part-time personnel who are already familiar with the children.

Parental Involvement

Partnering with Families

At Our Lady of Victory Catholic School Preschool, we create a sense of partnership by inviting parents/guardians to be part of their children's learning experiences and by working with families, without judgment, to best support each child's development.

PTG

The OLVCS Parent Teacher Guild is a link connecting our school families to our teachers and administration. The purpose of the PTG is to organize fun activities that benefit our school families, allowing parents/guardians and students alike to build relationships and pride in our school.

PTG organizes events such as the Back-to-School picnic, Family Fun Night, Father-Daughter events, Mother-Son events and many more. All parents/guardians of students at OLVCS are welcome to volunteer with the PTG.

The OLVCS PTG is led by a group of parent-volunteer officers who work with the teachers and administrations to organize and implement activities that meet the mission of the PTG.

OLVCS School Council

The OLVCS School Council consists of members of the administration, teacher staff, parents and outside representatives. The purpose of the Council is to assist the Pastor in fulfilling the mission of the Church through the educational program of the OLVCS PreK-8th grade program. The OLVCS School Council is constituted as a consultative body which, in fulfilling this mission, cooperates with and is guided by any legal or Diocesan directives or policies which regulate the conduct of Catholic education on the preschool level.

The OLVCS School Council develops and evaluates the policies by which the school's program is designed, implemented and evaluated. The Council is responsive to and collaborates with all the parishes sending children to the school as well as other councils and committees within the parish or school.

Further, the OLVCS School Council supports and organizes committees to address and meet the needs of OLVCS Preschool, Elementary and Middle School.

Parent Volunteers

Parent volunteers are an integral part of OLVCS. Any time or talent you can offer is valued and appreciated. All volunteers are required to submit criminal and child abuse clearances through the school Youth Protection Coordinator

Fundraising

We are grateful to all those who support the preschool programming at Our Lady of Victory Catholic School by making financial contributions. These donations are vital to the success of our school's mission, and our ability to support families who are in financial need. Donations

are tax deductible and welcome at any time. The following are OLVCS fundraising opportunities:

- **OLV Day Walk-A-Thon** This annual, all school event takes place at the beginning of each October on the Feast of Our Lady of Victory. Through this event, preschool student families partner with K-8th grade families to raise funds to support important curricular and extracurricular enhancements for OLVCS.
- **Gift Card Sales** Parents and friends of OLVCS can purchase gift cards to local businesses from the preschool office. A portion of the purchase price is returned to OLVCS Preschool to support our programming.
- **EITC Participation** Through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit program, eligible individuals, families and businesses may direct a portion of the PA state tax payment toward scholarships for Our Lady of Victory Catholic School PreK-8th grade.