

The Ocoee Oaks Preschool

Parent Handbook 2022-2023

**We are a Christ centered; Conscious Discipline based
program for children 12 months old through
pre-kindergarten (VPK)**



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Welcome to The Ocoee Oaks Preschool

Empowering Lifelong Learners

Welcome to the Ocoee Oaks Preschool Family! We are delighted you have chosen to partner with us in the growth and development of your child. Please read the parent Handbook carefully to understand our program and ensure a successful year for your child in preschool. Our school is an outreach ministry of Ocoee Oaks United Methodist Church. We are thankful that you and your family have entrusted us with the care of your child, and we look forward to making this early childhood experience a positive, joyous, and blessed one for your child and for you.

An important goal of our program is to help children become aware of God's character through Christian values and teachings that are interwoven into our school-wide, developmentally appropriate curriculum. God has blessed each child by creating him or her to be a unique individual and with the capacity to love and accept others for their uniqueness. We are committed to honoring and working with the special nature and talents of your child.

Ocoee Oaks Preschool was established in 2005 by Ocoee Oaks Church as a community outreach ministry and is advised by a governing School Board. We hope this ministry will also give you a sense of confidence that you have made a wise decision in choosing Ocoee Oaks Kids' Place.

Our goal is for children to feel a warm experience, personal acceptance, and to know preschool is a safe and fun place to be, full of love, laughter, and learning. Welcome.

Jane Steele Director

Lin Lindsay MA Administrator of School Programs



OUR SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

Ocoee Oaks embraces Conscious Discipline as the foundation for a child's emotional, social, physical, and cognitive development. To help children develop to their full potential, we offer a planned environment that encourages curiosity, hands-on discovery, and interaction with the school family. We provide developmental and age-appropriate opportunities for children to think creatively, make choices and solve problems. Our most important job is to support the positive self-image of each child, so they become successful in life and experience God's unconditional love.

OUR MISSION

Ocoee Oaks Preschool, a ministry of Ocoee Oaks UMC is committed to a Christian, developmentally appropriate program that provides a safe and nurturing environment while preparing children as lifelong learners.

OUR VISION

We are devoted to empowering children to be constructive problem solvers and inspired learners through the application of Conscious Discipline in a safe and loving Christian environment.

HOURS OF OPERATION

We are open Monday - Friday from 6:30am to 6:30pm.
Office hours are from 8:00am-6:00pm.

AGE OF CHILDREN

Our program is designed for children ages 12 months to five years. We offer a before and after school program for elementary and middle school students under our Kids' Place umbrella.

INCLUSION

We believe that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance, and belonging in childcare. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

At Ocoee Oaks, equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

MANDATED REPORTER POLICY

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of abuse, neglect, or abandonment to the Florida Abuse Hotline in accordance with statute 39.201 of the Florida Statutes. All staff are mandated reporters. The staff will report suspicious marks, behavior, or conditions that meet the criteria. The safety of the children is our priority.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child is not released except for that which is required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential. Program teachers have access to the files for health and other information to provide quality care for your child.

COMMUNICATION AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

****Procare Connect****- **Our primary source of communication.** Procare Connect is now an app that all parents need to connect with. Families will use this app for signing children in and out, payments and access to all online accounting. Teachers will now communicate through this app. Procare Connect will replace Class Dojo.

Facebook- Facebook page is Ocoee Oaks Preschool.

Newsletters- A newsletter is distributed each month via email or in print with upcoming events and information.

Email- We encourage you to provide an email address that you use regularly so that we may send you announcements, event invitations, newsletters, and general updates.

Bulletin Boards- Located throughout the center, bulletin boards provide center news, upcoming events, holiday closing dates, announcements, etc.

Conferences- We offer parent conferences twice a year. During these conferences, we will discuss your child's strengths, likes and dislikes, and styles of learning. We will work together to set goals for your child's growth and development. You may request additional conferences regarding your child's progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Parents and other family members are a child's first teacher. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved in the program, visit children's classrooms, participate in events, and provide feedback on the program. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals.

HOLIDAYS

We are closed for certain holidays: Labor Day; Thanksgiving and the day after, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, New Year's Day; Memorial Day and July 4. We will also close for professional development the day prior to school start date.

SMOKING POLICY

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor environment and vehicles used by the center are always non-smoking areas. Ocoee Oaks Kids' Place in accordance with DCF rules and Regulations is a smoke-free campus. Smoking is prohibited on the property.

REST TIME

After lunch, all children participate in a quiet rest time. The only exception are those children who attend the afternoon VPK class. Children are not required to sleep; however, they need to be quiet so others may sleep.

TOILET TRAINING

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions, and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is supported in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.

LOST AND FOUND

You can look for lost items and bring found items to the Lost and found table located in the main building across from the main school entrance. Please note that we are not responsible for lost personal property. Items left for 30 days, or more are donated.

TUITION AND FEES

Payment is always due in advance with no deduction for any absences, holidays, or closures due to inclement weather, power outages or other situations beyond our control. Please download the Procure Connect app to have access to all payment options.

Late payments can pose serious problems for our programs. If your payment is late an extra fee of \$25.00 is added to your account. There is a \$25.00 charge for returned checks. Two returned checks will place your account on a credit card or cash basis only.

Late pick-up is not a normal program option and is considered as an exceptional occurrence. Late fees of \$5.00 for every 5 minutes will be assessed past 6:30pm. VPK morning times are 8:50-9:10 for drop off and 12:00- 12:10 for pick-up. Afternoon VPK times are 12:50- 1:10pm for drop off and 4:00-4:10 for pick-up. We close promptly at 6:30 pm. For questions contact our school office at school.office@ocoeoaks.org.

ATTENDANCE AND WITHDRAWAL

If your child is going to be absent or unusually late, please call us at 407-293-6650 or contact their teacher. We will be concerned about your child if we do not hear from you. We will contact you if you do not contact us to ensure your child's status.

VPK Attendance Policy- is in accordance with the State of Florida VPK 80/20 rule for attendance. This is 33 days in our program, approximately 3 days per month. Should your child exceed the permitted absences, we reserve the right to dis-enroll your child from the VPK program at our school. You may choose to continue your child's care with us by using our private self-pay program.

Withdrawal- A written notice two weeks is required by the center when a child is being withdrawn.

TOYS FROM HOME

We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into the center unless they are part of a show-and -tell activity.

RESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR

All children and families are treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior. If this occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior or to remove your children from our care.

PERSONNEL

All staff members will be of good moral character. They will have all the proper screening and certification set by DCF. Each teacher has certification in CPR and First Aid. They are also required to have continuing education training yearly.

CLOTHING

Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Your child will be involved in a variety of activities including sidewalk chalk, outdoor play, and other sensory activities. Our playground is used as an extension of our center, and daily programs are conducted outside whenever weather permits.

One aspect of concern is the risk associated with children's clothing that may become entangled with climbing or sliding equipment or that could lead to choking or other serious harm. All drawstrings from children's clothes are removed as a precaution.

Girls need to wear shorts or pants underneath their dresses.

All children need to bring a change of clothes in their backpack daily in case of an accident.

Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for center play and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities. Please use tennis shoes for the safety of your child.

MEDICATIONS

We do not dispense over the counter medications. If your child needs a prescription medication administered during the day, it must be in the original container from the pharmacy, and you must fill out an Authorization for Prescription medication form.

INJURIES

Safety is a major concern in childcare. Daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area to prevent injuries. If your child sustains a minor injury, first aid is administered. You will receive a report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you are contacted immediately.

WEATHER INFORMATION

If the Orange County School Board issues a bulletin that public schools are closed due to weather warnings, we will also be closed that day. Whenever there is a severe weather warning and time and safety permit, the children are moved to the main building for additional safety.

HEALTH and SAFETY

Illness Policy

It is hard to know when to keep your child home from school due to symptoms of illness. Reasons for excluding or keeping your child home from school would be his/her inability to participate in regular activities or having any of the following:

- Fever or chills (temperature should be normal without medication for 24 hours prior to returning to school)
- Changes in behavior that might signal he/she is getting sick such as lethargy or decreased activity level, irritability, or persistent crying.
- Nausea/Vomiting (more than two times in a 24- hour period)
- Persistent cough if it interferes with normal activities
- Earache (when accompanied by fever).
- Mucus discharge from the nose, eyes, or ears (when accompanied by fever)
- Head lice: Please notify the school so that we can treat the environment. We need to verify your child is lice and NIT free before returning to school.

If your child has any of the following conditions, please contact your doctor for the appropriate treatment and bring a note indicating it is safe for your child to return to school:

Pin Worms	Hepatitis A	Scabies
Pink Eye	MRSA Infection	Strep Throat
Impetigo	ROTO Virus	Chicken Pox
Whooping Cough		

Due to the contagious nature of these conditions, please notify the school so that we can alert parents if necessary and be watchful for symptoms in other children.

A mandatory next day out is required for the following conditions:

- Fever of 100.4 or higher
- Diarrhea (2 or more episodes)
- Vomiting (2 or more episodes)
- They are not able to participate in the normal daily activities.
- They are not free of open oozing skin conditions unless a doctor's note states their condition is not contagious.

If it is determined that your child is sick and needs to be picked up, they will be in the office area, separate from other children to avoid contamination to other children or materials.

Please respond to our call immediately and pick-up your child. See above for the mandatory next day out protocol. The only exception is a doctor's note stating your child is not contagious.

Required Documents

Current shot AND physical records are required for all students and must be maintained/kept current while the child is enrolled. Please note that if your child's immunization records and physical are not current, your child may be excused from the program until records are produced. Parents may provide a religious exemption certificate in lieu of shot records. Some students may not be fully immunized at the time of enrollment.

Daily Precautions

Ocoee Oaks number one priority continues to be the health and safety of the children and staff at our center. Every decision, policy and procedure are based on the recommendations from the CDC, local health authorities and the Department of Early Learning. We have confidence in our enhanced hygiene practices, intensified cleaning, disinfection protocols and COVID-19 exclusion policies.

- Frequent handwashing throughout the day.
- Toys in all classrooms are cleaned and sanitized on a more frequent basis.
- Children are taught to cough or sneeze into their elbow.
- Classrooms are rotating toys out to provide more space for play.
- The playground is sanitized frequently.
- Rigorous cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces are completed daily.
- The classrooms are sanitized by an ozone process nightly.

It is a parent's responsibility to contact the Center if any member of your household has or has been in close contact with anyone who has a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. The family must complete the quarantine protocol established by the CDC.

If your child has any of the following symptoms, they may not come to the Center:

- Fever of 100.4
- Cough
- Sore Throat
- Muscle Aches
- Difficulty Breathing
- New loss of Taste or Smell

If your child becomes ill at the Center, we will isolate the child in the office and request family to pick up the child within one hour. We will keep your child comfortable and will continue to observe for symptoms.

Ocoee Oaks reserves the right to reinstate any necessary COVID protocols based on CDC recommendations.

EMERGENCIES

In case of an accident or emergency we contact the parent, or the person so designated by the parents. In the event of a serious accident, the Center will secure immediate medical services at the emergency room of the nearest hospital or one that the parents have designated. A medical release form authorizing this is included in the registration packet.

LOST OR MISSING CHILD

In the unlikely event that a child becomes lost or separated from the group, all available staff search for the child. If the child is not located within 10 minutes, the family and the police are notified.

FIRE SAFETY

Our facility is fully equipped with an alarm system, emergency lights and fire extinguishers throughout the facility. We do a monthly safety drill, and the evacuation plan is reviewed by the staff every six months.

DROP OFF AND PICKUP

CELL PHONE USAGE

The times you spend at the Center dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time our staff has to communicate with you about your child. To make the best use of these opportunities, and to be attentive to your child and other children, we ask that you not use your cell phone while visiting the Center.

NEW POLICY: The cut-off time for drop off for any child is 10:00AM

- The person who drops off and picks up your child must make sure that the child is signed in/out daily, either with the Procure Connect App or have their teacher sign the child in. This gives us a permanent record of your child's attendance in our center.
- All preschool students should arrive here by 9:00 a.m. Morning is our busiest learning and social time for students.
 - PLEASE HOLD YOUR CHILD'S HAND WHEN IN THE PARKING LOT.

Please do not leave siblings in the car unattended and do not leave purses or valuables in your vehicle.

Your child is not dismissed to anyone that is not on the emergency contact list in his/her file in the office. Emergency contact persons must be prepared to show their driver's license in the school office to ensure there is authorization for pick-up.

To safeguard your child, we will need copies of any court ordered custody agreements. Without a custody agreement, we are not able to prevent the release of your child to a parent.

If a child is not picked up at closing, and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you and the contacts listed on the Emergency form. After one hour, if we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency contact, we will call the local child protective services agency.

RIGHT TO REFUSE CHILD RELEASE

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency Contact pick-up the child, or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Recurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

FOOD INFORMATION

WE ARE A PEANUT FREE SCHOOL. NO FOODS WITH PEANUTS OR PEANUT BUTTER ARE ALLOWED ON CAMPUS TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF ALL OF OUR CHILDREN.

WATER

Water is the best drink to prevent dehydration and keep us healthy.

We ask that all children bring a refillable water bottle each day. We prefer a water bottle that has a spout that folds down to prevent spills.

NUTRITIOUS FOOD IDEAS

Creating a healthy appetizing snack or lunch for a child to take to school can be a daily challenge. You want the meal to be nutritious, but most of all you want your child to eat it. New and different foods can be fun and can encourage your child's appetite.

Sandwiches need not always be the staple. Instead of cookies, cakes or chips try including a few natural sweets such as fresh or dried fruits, real fruit juice or fruit kabobs. No candy, gum or soda are allowed in your child's lunch. Remember that lunch is the fuel that will keep your child going through the day. The following are some suggestions from the staff:

Hard boiled eggs

Macaroni and cheese with ham

Waffles with jam
Rice cakes with chicken salad

Tuna fish on crackers
Yogurt with fresh fruit and granola

English muffin with turkey and cheese
Leftover pizza
Salami and cheese roll-ups

Ham and cheese on biscuit
Mini bagels
Cream cheese on crackers

BIRTHDAY TREATS

Pre-packaged birthday snacks and a party napkin may be provided for your child's class snack time to celebrate his/her birthday. For a birthday snack, the following pre-packaged items are appropriate: store/bakery made cookies (plain cookies with frosting and sprinkles can become a decorating project!) mini-cupcakes, fruit snacks, or other simple treats that are easy to handle. Full sized cupcakes and cakes are NOT permitted. Home-baked treats are not permitted.

CLASSROOM HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Ocoee Oaks Preschool sponsors school-wide holiday celebrations during the year. All holiday crafts and treats are pre-planned by each age level team. Parents are asked to participate by signing up to either donate an item or to be a classroom helper for the celebration. We do not have the facilities to accommodate many guests in the classroom, so we ask parents to take turns to ensure that each parent could participate in some event. To participate in your child's classroom celebrations, please sign up when requested as a volunteer. Please make childcare arrangements for younger siblings. We request all holiday celebrations involve healthy foods.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum used in our Center is selected to meet the needs of each age level. In our 1-, 2- and 3-year-old rooms we use Learning Beyond Paper. In our VPK classrooms, we use an integrated curriculum that includes Creative Curriculum, Zoo-Phonics, Handwriting Without Tears as well as Scholastic educational materials. Along with the age-appropriate curriculum, we also learn through playtime, songs, nature, stories, outside play, sharing time, and much more. The classrooms will stay under the child-teacher ratio as set by our licensing agent DCF.

	Student		Teacher
Toddlers	6	to	1
K-2	10	to	2
K-3	15	to	2
K-4	18	to	2

Technology in classrooms

Children in our VPK will have access to tablets or laptop computers. Devices are used for some learning goals and for our VPK assessment.

Discipline Policy

Ocoee Oaks Preschool is a Conscious Discipline® school that uses the School Family model of classroom management. “Conscious Discipline® is a comprehensive self-regulation program that integrates social-emotional learning, school culture and discipline. It empowers staff to respond to conflict as teachable moments in such a manner as to teach life skills and problem solving. (Becky A. Bailey, 2014)

We have adopted the recommended discipline rules from the Orange County License Board and ensure all discipline is age-appropriate, constructive, and instructive in nature and will not be severe, humiliating, frightening or associated with food, rest, or toileting. All forms of physical punishment are prohibited.

The Five Steps to Self- Regulation, are taught through the social/emotional curriculum and supported by the staff and the School Family. These activities and interventions support emerging self-regulation and help children be successful. (Becky A. Bailey, 2014)

Additionally, we provide opportunities for staff and teachers to communicate with parents about the development and wellbeing of each child. Regular communication is encouraged, through notes, phone calls, scheduled annual conferences and called conferences as needed. We encourage parents to communicate with the staff and actively participate in all aspects of the program.

Children have moments when their outward behavior reveals that an upset internal state and conflict has occurred. The staff of Ocoee Oaks Preschool will initiate the following Discipline Plan:

- **Choice to be Helpful:** Children are reminded of the class commitment and given two positive helpful choices
- **Choice of the Safe Place:** Continued disruptive behavior is supported in the Safe Place Learning Center. Children may choose to go on their own, follow suggestions by other children in the School Family, or be helped to the center by the teacher. The teacher will monitor the child’s progress in the Safe Place and step in to support learning and the mastery of the Five Steps to Self-Regulation. The Safe Place is the emotional regulation center in the classroom. The purpose of the Safe Place is to “provide a place where children can learn to self-regulate. Children use the Safe Place to learn how to change their internal state from upset to calm to maximize their learning potential.” (Becky A. Bailey, 2014). a)
- **Step 1: I AM...** Children are triggered into a state of upset and learn to go to the Safe Place.
Step 2: I CALM... Children are taught calming techniques and are supported in their use during upset.
Step 3: I FEEL... Children learn to name their feelings. Once they can name their feelings and become conscious of it, they are able to begin managing the moment.

Step 4: **I CHOOSE**...Children are assisted in choosing a “brain Strategy” that helps them move from the lower center of the brain to the higher center of the brain in order to return to the classroom activities, ready to participate and learn.

Step 5: **I SOLVE**...Something triggered the child into an upset state prior to entering the Safe Place. In this step, children discuss other solution options so that future upsets result in appropriate problem-solving skills. Conscious Discipline®, all Rights Reserved.

1-800-842-2846. For more information visit www.consciousdiscipline.com

- **Behavior Plan:** If this upset continues, staff and management meet to develop a Behavior Plan. This plan includes the Undesired Behavior and the Desired Behavior, activities to establish/strengthen connections and teach skills to correct unwanted behavior. Parents will be kept aware of behavior plans in place. Parents may offer suggestions in the Behavior Plan.
- **Logical Consequence**
- **Parent/Teacher Conference**
- **Parent/Teacher/Director Conference**
- **Referrals where appropriate**
- **Parent/Director/Board/Pastor Conference**
- **Dismissal of the child from care** -The staff of Ocoee Oaks Preschool reserves the right to enter this Discipline Plan at any point. Parents will be kept informed of all serious infractions of this policy. The Director is available for scheduled, private conferences with parents upon request. APPEAL PROCESS: Parents may appeal, without fear of repercussion, any decision of the school to the School Board. A written request may be sent to the Board Chairperson in advance of the regular board meeting. The request is considered, and the parents notified of the outcome. All board decisions are final.

Ocoee Oaks 2022- 2023 School Calendar

Monday	August 8	Ocoee Oaks closed for professional development
Wednesday	August 10	First Day of school
Monday	September 5	Labor Day-Ocoee Oaks closed all programs
Mon-Fri	Nov 21-25	Thanksgiving Break - VPK closed
Thur & Fri	Nov 24-25	Thanksgiving Day/Friday – Closed all programs
Mon-Mon	Dec 19- Jan 2	Winter Break- VPK closed
Tuesday	January 3	No School (VPK only)
Monday	January 16	No School (VPK only) MLK day observed
Monday	February 20	No School (VPK only) Presidents Day observed
Mon-Fri	March 13-17	No School (VPK only) Spring Break
Friday	May 26	Last Day of School
Friday	May 26	VPK Graduation