



OWENS CHRISTIAN ACADEMY PARENT HANDBOOK

Revised May 2023

Welcome To Owens Christian Academy

We understand that every day is essential in your child's life. That is why we strive for excellent service in every aspect of our care to children attending Owens Christian Academy (OCA). We commit to providing an up-to-date curriculum, thorough training for our teachers, and a great learning environment for our students. At OCA, making sure our students receive loving attention and enjoy their time at OCA is the most critical and satisfying part of our job. Please take time to familiarize yourself with our policies and procedures, and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Mission Statement

OCA provides a Christian environment for preschoolers, ages two through seven, which encourages them to become responsible, independent learners. We believe children vary significantly regarding their background and style of learning. A student's success depends primarily on a combination of self-concepts, Christian beliefs, parental (which refers to and includes legal guardians, etc., throughout this document) support, and student efforts. We strive to stimulate learning both in and out of the classroom. Also, OCA aims to understand the world with each student and help them make choices that will lead to a lifetime of learning. Our program encourages a balance between cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. Our goals are to prepare our students for a successful and rewarding elementary experience.

Goals and Objectives

1. We will provide multi-leveled and multi-sensory activities to reach every student at his or her level.
2. We will nurture a safe and friendly learning environment.
3. We will strive to be a catalyst in each student's approach to learning.
4. We will assist students in becoming creative, critical thinkers.

Through workshops and continuing education courses, the staff will stay abreast of new educational procedures and ideas.

Curriculum

At OCA, we realize learning through hypothesizing, risk-taking, predicting, and self-correcting. We designed a student-centered curriculum, which utilizes units of activities focused around themes using a holistic approach. OCA's curriculum focuses on a print-rich environment that includes: reading children's literature in all its varieties, math with a wide assortment of manipulatives, prewriting and writing activities, science and social studies projects, computer skills, and curriculum-related art and music.

License

The State of South Carolina licenses OCA. We meet or exceed all state standards concerning building, classroom equipment, staff ratios, safety and health procedures, nutrition, and curriculum. Also, OCA must report to the appropriate state agency any suspected child abuse, neglect, exploitation, or deprivation. We have posted our license and DSS site visit citation in the office for your review.

Admissions

OCA offers quality care and development for children ages two through seven. We accept children without regard to race, color, disabilities, sex, national origin, or religious belief. All children must meet the state's health requirements. The Department of Social Services requires DHEC Form 1148 (South Carolina Certificate of Immunization), obtained from your pediatrician, on the first day of attendance. OCA will inform parents when they do not meet this requirement. The parents' responsibility is to notify the OCA staff immediately of any significant changes in their child's personal information.

Continued Enrollment

After one month of OCA attendance, the OCA's director (Mrs. Angenita F. Owens) and staff will assess your child to determine if OCA is the best fit for your child and their individual needs. At the end of this assessment, the director has the right to determine whether continued enrollment at OCA is appropriate for your child. Suppose the director determines that OCA is not the appropriate program for your child. In that case, she will recommend other options or placements for your child, and OCA will terminate the enrollment contract. The decision to terminate enrollment shall be at the director's sole discretion, and she will communicate her decision to the parents. Additionally, OCA's director also reserves the right to deny admittance or to revoke or suspend enrollment of a student, at her discretion, for reasons including, but not limited to the following:

- Delinquent of tuition and PTA activity fees
- Lack of current immunization records
- Student's repeated disruptive behavior
- Parents will honor the year-round school calendar; school begins August 15, 2023, and ends July 26, 2024.
- Consistent lengthy delays in picking up ill or disruptive children

Attendance

Owens Christian Academy ("OCA") has an extended school calendar that begins in August and ends in July. Parent(s) or guardian(s) and students of OCA must have the intent to attend OCA for the entire calendar year-at the time of enrollment. All enrolled students are expected to regularly attend school. OCA reserves the right to contact parent/guardian when a student has excessive unexcused absences. Excused absences include illness or death in the family. The school calendar year begins the 3rd week in August and ends on the last Friday in July.

Attendance for K5-1st grade is required by the State Department of Education and the Department of Social Services. OCA will take attendance daily, and students' school records will reflect absences. If a student has ten days of unexcused absences, then they will fail the year. The student's parents must provide a physician-written medical excuse to the school if a K5-1st grade student misses more than three consecutive days of school.

Termination

A parent/guardian may withdraw a student from OCA for good cause prior to the end of the school year. Notice of withdrawal must be in writing, state the reason for withdrawal, and submitted to OCA at least 30 days prior to the withdrawal. Good causes for withdrawal include, but is not limited to, illness, long-term illness of a parent/guardian, or relocation out of state. OCA reserves the right to stipulate other good causes. OCA's school budget is determined based on student enrollment for the entire school year. If a parent/guardian withdraws a student without good cause, the parent/guardian is responsible for paying the full tuition rate. OCA will withhold tax records and students' files if parents do not meet financial obligations. Only OCA's director may waive the notice provisions.

Sick Days/Holidays/Inclement Weather

- Since we pay our staff whether your child attends or not, we cannot give reductions or credits for days your child misses due to illness.
- We do not give credit for holidays even if OCA is closed because we pay our staff for holidays and cannot absorb this cost.
- No credit is given for inclement weather days when the school closes early or for the entire day.

Hours

OCA is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, to meet our parents' needs. Since the school closes at 5:00 p.m., we ask that parents picking up their child(ren) on time to observe proper closing procedures. **OCA will assess a \$1.00 late fee for every minute after 5:00 p.m. The late payment is due on that day.**

Early Care--- We provide this service from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. on Monday – Friday for an additional fee \$20 per week.

After Care--- This service is offered from 5:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Monday – Friday for an additional fee of \$20 per week.

Parental Rights

At OCA, every parent has the right to tour the premises at any time. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's education. Since a child's education is an ongoing process, our curriculum includes classroom participation and home activities. Parents may request a conference with the teacher or an administrator during school hours (1:00 p.m. – 2:50 p.m.) through Zoom. OCA recognizes the importance of the home school connection; therefore, we offer a parenting program designed to promote parents' and staff's positive rapport. Teachers will conduct orientation and parent workshops. Specific information relative to curricula, such as instructional techniques, communication procedures, teacher expectation, student recognition, behavior management, and parental involvement are shared with parents at orientation and workshops. OCA will treat all students as special, unique individuals. We believe at OCA; every parent wants his or her child to be an OCA alumnus.

Policies and Procedures

1. Tuition

Tuition is due based upon your agreement with FACTS Management. The total weekly rate applies to zero or five-day(s) attendance. Students absent for a week during the regular school year due to illness or inclement weather will still need to pay full tuition for the week.

Tuition is \$230.00 per week K-2; \$220.00 per week K-3, K-4, and Kindergarten/First.

The Registration Fee is \$325.00 per student (non-refundable/ non-transferable).

This annual fee for the following school term is due the second Monday in February.

The Materials Fee for K-1st students is \$350.00 per student (non-refundable/ non-transferable).

NOTE: Annual fee for all students, except for K1 students, are required to pay the initial \$325 (\$100 registration fee and \$225 materials fee) upon registration. Students enrolled in the K1 class must pay the initial \$350 (\$100 registration fee and \$250 materials fee) upon registration. **Open Enrollment begins the third Tuesday in February.**

2. Visitation

Our "open door" policy lends itself to parental visits at any time. OCA grants students' parents free and complete access unless a court order stipulates otherwise. We ask that parents do not disrupt classroom programs. At the time of enrollment, parents should meet with the director to familiarize themselves with the school's policies and procedures. Please adhere to the teachers' schedule, which is available on the school's website. Before your child's first day, parents are encouraged to visit and observe their child's classroom's daily routine.

3. Personal Articles

OCA is not liable for lost or damaged articles brought to the school. We strongly recommend that all personal articles, including clothing, be marked clearly with your child's name. All children should have an extra set of clothing kept in their bookbags in case of accidents or water activities.

4. Drop Off and Pick Up

Parents should always accompany their child(ren) into and out of the school, **especially from the vehicle to the gate.** OCA will release a child ONLY to the parent or guardian or the person(s) authorized by the parent or guardian.

For children picked up after 5:00 p.m., OCA will assess a \$1.00 late fee for every minute after 5:00 p.m. The late payment is due on that day.

5. Discipline

Discipline is training to develop self-control and social competence. For consistency, there must be a joint effort between the child, parents, and teacher. OCA constantly praises good behavior with a positive attitude. **"Time Out" with the child facing the group, no longer than one minute per year of age (e.g., if a child is four, then time out will last four minutes), is the only disciplinary method used. We do not administer corporal punishment.**

6. Safety

Providing a safe environment for your child(ren) is extremely important to us. We promote safety rules and regulations to minimize accidents. However, should an accident occur, OCA will immediately notify parents. For emergency purposes, each parent or guardian must complete a notarized authorization for medical treatment. If an emergency arises, we want the child(ren) to receive immediate and proper medical attention.

7. Potty Training

It is NOT essential for children entering the two-year-old class to be potty trained, but it IS important for children entering the three-year-old class to be potty-trained.

8. Medication

OCA will not administer over-the-counter medication. For prescribed medication, **the physician must sign a Medication Authorization Form with written step-by-step procedures for dispensing the medicine in its proper dosage.** The drug must be in its original container, clearly indicating the child's name, physician's name, and the appropriate measuring utensil. Any adverse reactions to medication will be reported to the parents immediately. **OCA will send all medication home each Friday.**

9. Illness

OCA stresses safe hygiene and sanitation practices per DHEC and OSHA standards. We are aware that our facility allows parents to pursue their careers; however, we must ask that you consider how your child's illness may affect the other children and staff at the school. If you are unsure whether you should keep your child(ren) at home, please contact your pediatrician before bringing your child(ren) to school. Children who develop symptoms will rest in a designated area isolated from the group until a parent arrives. Children with a temperature of 100.4°F or higher and/or other contagious symptoms cannot stay at the school. The school will notify parents if their child becomes symptomatic. OCA will require Immediate pickup to reduce the spread of the illness throughout the school. According to state regulations, children must be free of abnormal temperature and show no signs of disease for a recommended 24 hours. If your child(ren) is exposed to a communicable disease while attending the school, we will notify you promptly. Likewise, parents must report to OCA their child(ren) exposure to a contagious illness outside the school. OCA notifies the Health Department of any infectious diseases. For your child's health and the other children attending the school, any child who has contracted a communicable disease or skin disease must provide a physician authorization before OCA allows re-admittance. We do not care for mildly ill children.

10. Evacuation Plan/Emergency Preparedness

Evacuations due to fire, or threatening situations that may pose a health or safety hazard, are handled exactly like a fire drill. Children and teachers exit the building through assigned doors, OCA will take the roll, and teachers supervise children in the designated areas until it is safe to return to the building. Upon re-entering the building, OCA will retake the roll. OCA conducts Tornado drills in the following manner: toddlers and K-4's will enter the classroom bathroom and squat down on the floor against the walls. K-3 and K-1st will enter the hall outside their classroom and squat down on the floor against the walls.

Emergency plans for severe weather and emergency evacuation are posted in the classroom. OCA will notify parents of emergency evacuation and school closing via local news channels, email, or the calling post. (OCA uses the Calling Post messaging system to communicate with parents by delivering messages via the phone system and Remind App through text messages.) OCA follows emergency procedures used by Charleston County School District.

11. Menus/Breakfast

Please review the weekly menu posted in each classroom. Our menus meet state and federal guidelines for nutritional requirements by age. If your child has allergies to any of the menu's foods, please notify the staff immediately. OCA is a nut-free facility. **OCA does not allow outside food** due to Department of Health and Environmental Control or DHEC regulations and issues associated with liability. OCA only permits food from home under a doctor's order for a specific diet. We understand that children have likes and dislikes, but our goal is to provide a healthy, balanced meal to our students.

12. Breakfast / Morning Procedure

Breakfast is served between 7:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. daily. All students who arrive between 7:30 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. should report to their classroom and breakfast will be served.

13. Birthdays or special events

For birthdays or special events, parents are welcome to send special treats to the school. Please let the staff know in advance of your plans.

14. Conferences

Parents are encouraged to visit with their child's teacher to exchange information and concerns whenever necessary. If you would like to schedule a particular conference, please notify your child's teacher. OCA will utilize Zoom for parent conferences.

15. Volunteering

OCA is a private Christian program; therefore, there are no public funding sources, so parental support (including volunteerism) is vital to meet the school's needs.

Parents are required to volunteer at least 15 hours for the school year. You must become involved with your child's educational development. A parent or guardian may designate another family member (aunt, uncle, grandparent, cousin, etc.) to volunteer. If a parent or guardian elects not to volunteer or secure a designee to volunteer, a \$150 (\$75 for the first semester and \$75 for the second semester) fee will be assessed to accounts. We will assess first semester fees on December 16th and July 14th for the second semester fees. OCA requires completing all volunteer hours (a full 15 hours) by July 14th to avoid fees. Please contact the OCA office or PTA Board member for suggestions.

Once a fee has been assessed, volunteer hours may be completed instead of payment (first semester only).

16. Smoking

Smoking is prohibited on the premises by staff, parents, and visitors. A visitor intends to enter the school building on behalf of an enrollee or prospective student.

17. Uniforms

Uniforms should be worn every day during the school year and at OCA S.T.E.A.M Camp unless otherwise advised. Uniforms consist of navy pants or jumper and plain light blue or burgundy tops. Uniform tops should be free of writing and art, including cartoon and animated characters. No jeans are allowed. All necessary uniform items are available online from French Toast uniforms (e.g., Our school code is QS5RDJG) at

<https://www.frenchtoastschoolbox.com/>

18. Field Trips

OCA will plan several field trips during the school year and OCA S.T.E.A.M Camp.

All who attend OCA's field trip must wear burgundy t-shirts or sweatshirts on the field trips during the regular school year. All who attend OCA's field trip during Summer Camp must wear light-blue t-shirts on field trips.

Once signing up for field trips, parents are responsible for advance financial obligations.

19. PTA / Executive Board

The PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) will accomplish its mission by pursuing funding to support OCA operations, participating in community projects, purchasing new and advanced curriculum, and providing overall support to the students, families, and OCA staff. OCA PTA will plan several fundraisers throughout the year. **A calendar of events will be given in the OCA site portal.**

OCA PTA is a non-profit organization with 501 (c)(3) exempt status. It is a requirement that each family pays \$25 annually. Contributions are tax-deductible. For exemption purposes, all checks should be made payable to OCA PTA and NOT to OCA.

PTA purchases sleeping cots for all new students. Parents must pay a \$40 cot fee. All checks should be made payable to OCA PTA and NOT to OCA. Due to a surplus of cots, the fee will be waived.

PTA meetings are held the first Monday of every month at 5:00 p.m. OCA Executive Board meets to establish policy, set goals, and evaluate the OCA PTA. OCA Executive board meets the last Monday in every month at 5:00 p.m.

20. Homework

Homework is an integral part of your child's school experience. **Homework assignments are given Monday through Thursday to all students. All homework assignments should be completed on Friday.** All submitted assignments will be corrected and sent home on Friday. Supporting good work habits is imperative to student success; student success requires a joint effort between parents and the school. **Parents MUST assist their students with homework.**

21. Weekly Progress

Your child's teacher will send a weekly report home every Friday to address concerns and provide parents with information. **Please sign and return the weekly report every Monday. Your signature indicates that you have read and understood the contents of the document.**

22. OCA Website

OCA maintains a website to provide information about the school and school related events. A monthly newsletter will be available. The school's website's address is www.owenschristianacademy.com.

23. Calling Post/ Email

OCA uses the Calling Post messaging system to communicate with parents by delivering messages through the phone system.

Our OCA email address is owenscademy@gmail.com; we will send out mass parent emails using this address and **the email addresses provided on the google form directory. Do not request access to our documents from unknown email addresses.** If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please use this email address. We answer emails from 7:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; please give us 24 hours to respond. If you have direct questions for your child's teacher, please email their teacher.

24. Release of Children:

Children are delivered to/picked up daily from their classroom. Parents/ Guardians sign the child/children in and out daily. OCA will only release children to those listed on the pickup list, and that person must have picture identification to receive the child. Parents must notify the school in writing or by phone the day of child's pickup or delivery.

25. Tracking Children:

As stated in the above paragraph, children are signed in and out daily by the parent/ guardian or the person picking up or bringing their child/ children to our school. OCA uses the tracking sheet to track each child from when the child enters the building until the student leaves the facility. Also, OCA uses the tracking sheet every hour to keep account of every child throughout the day. The tracking sheet is carried outside for playtime or evacuations (fire drills, safety hazards, field trips, etc.)

26. Emergency Medical Plan:

Added to our emergency policy, it must read: "If hospital care is necessary, OCA will contact EMS, and the child will be taken to the hospital choice listed on the emergency card signed by the parent/guardian. The person in charge of the school will escort the child with records to the emergency location and stay with the child until they arrive.

27. Confidentially: All students' record to include name, **address**, and other information about the child or family and information that may identify a child is kept and locked in a file cabinet upstairs in the director's office. OCA prohibits staff members from giving out any information concerning a child or their family.

Provisionally Hire: We elect not to hire provisional employees to provide care to enroll children when an unexpected staff vacancy occurs. All staff must have clearance with state and federal background check results, central registry, medical and health assessments, high school diploma/college degree, professional training, and a signed facility agreement regarding all school policies and DSS Regulations from the South Carolina Department of Social Service Child Care Licensing.

Revised by OCA May 2023