



A parents' guide to your child's  
first year at school



**Orillia Christian School**

## ***Welcome!***

Thank you for enrolling your child at Orillia Christian School. Starting Kindergarten is the beginning of the wonderful and exciting journey of learning. We are excited to welcome you to the Orillia Christian School community and help you get off to a positive start. We are happy that you are considering Christian education for your child. You will find that there is something truly special about learning academically, socially, physically, emotionally and spiritually under the Lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We strongly believe that you are the guardian of your child's education and you have already been his/her first teacher. By encouraging independence, fostering responsibility, instilling biblical values, and nurturing self-esteem, you have provided the foundation for the next step into his/her education. We believe that each child is made in the image of God and has unique God-given abilities. It is the desire of the school to encourage, support, and nurture those gifts that each child has been blessed with.

At Orillia Christian School, we strive to give your child different opportunities to explore, play, and learn. It is so important at this early age for each child to be given a variety of "hands-on" learning experiences. They will build, paint, draw, count, read, write, act, sing, dance, jump, run, and play. We believe that church, school, and home should work together to help raise up a child. Not only do we start the day with prayer and devotions but we acknowledge the Lordship of God throughout the day in all school activities.

May your child's first year at school be filled with many amazing opportunities to learn more about this fantastic world that God has created!

**"All Thy Children shall be taught of the Lord." Isaiah 54:13**

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## ***Goals of the Kindergarten Program***

Orillia Christian School is a member of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools (OACS). *The Kindergarten Resource Manual: A Resource of Christian Schools* (Bevaart et al., 2008) states that the goal of Christian education according to the OACS is as follows:

***The primary goal of the Christian education is to help each student to grow into an independent person who serves God according to His Word and is able and willing to employ every talent to the honour of God for the well-being of all fellow creatures in every area of life.***

This primary goal will guide each kindergarten student to:

- *Develop a deeper commitment to love God.*

Through daily participation in devotions, lessons in Bible study and teacher direction into the wonders of God's creation in all subject areas, the Kindergarten program nurtures the faith development of the young child. Times of praise, prayer, and biblical instruction are **foundational** in the young child's growing awareness of and commitment to Jesus Christ.

- *Mature as a Christian person in relation to self, others, and the environment.*

For the young child, the Kindergarten program is the first experience of sustained social relationships with others. The class routines with the kindergarten program, the group interactions and the exploration of the school environment and wider community all assist in the child's social development.

- *Discover and develop God-given gifts and talents.*

The Kindergarten program introduces the young child to new ways of expression and an expanded range of topics. The rich, experiential setting of the Kindergarten class enables the child to discover and to demonstrate areas of giftedness and personal interest.

- *Develop abilities of perception and judgment in moral and ethical matters.*

Through interactions and relationships experienced in the Kindergarten program, the child is led by the classroom teacher to develop awareness of a Christian way of living.

- *Follow the norms of good health and physical fitness.*

Through class activity, free time exercise, and lessons in movement, the Kindergarten program guides the young child in physical development. Encouragement and instruction regarding good food choices, personal hygiene, and safe play all promote a positive attitude in the young child about taking good care of one's body.

- *Develop the knowledge and understanding to fulfill a God-given calling effectively in modern society.*

The Kindergarten program at OCS provides a personal adventure of self-discovery grounded in the assurance that God has a plan and purpose for each child. Engaging the child in a broad spectrum of learning activities is preparation of a life of Christian service as responsible citizens.

- *Develop awareness as a learner to adapt knowledge, skills, and attitudes to the ordinary tasks of life.*

Through instruction in literacy, numeracy, and co-operative interaction, the young child begins to master the basic skills and abilities required in today's society. The Kindergarten program equips the child in early educational competencies, which are essential for further learning and living.

- *Acquire competencies for responsible living as an adult, especially the sensitivity and skill necessary for effective communication.*

The Kindergarten program provides experiences that build a strong foundation for literacy and numeracy development. The child is nurtured in the ability to listen, speak, and read with Christian discernment.

- *Acquire appreciation for the customs, habits, and beliefs of other faith communities, ethnic groups, and cultures.*

Through the interaction of personal stories, books, poetry, art, music, and excursions in the neighbourhood, the Kindergarten program provides opportunities for the child to experience and appreciate other communities.

“Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6

# ***What Can I Do To Prepare My Child For School?***

## ***Spiritually:***

Spiritual growth is the most important aspect of a child's life. The first priority is making sure that your child knows that God made them and everything in this world. Your child is uniquely created in His image and is loved by God! He sent His Son to die on the cross for his/her sins.

Your child also needs to see parents who model their spiritual life. A child needs to be part of family prayer and devotions, and should see parents walking their Christian walk-such as praying during the day. Above all else, children need to be treated with love, like our heavenly Father shows us love. It can be difficult sometimes, but is required of us in Scripture. Children will learn to love others if they see good role models of that in their own family.

## ***Fine Motor Skills:***

It is very important for children to have strong fine motor skills, especially for school. So many of the activities at school, like writing and cutting, depend on strong finger muscles. There are tons of activities you can do with your child to help him/her build muscles. These activities are a lot of fun (though they can be messy!) Here are some suggestions:

- Cook some spaghetti and have your child make shapes or letters with the noodles.
- Make some pudding and have your child draw in it! Sweetened condensed milk and whipped cream are some other tasty treats to try finger painting in. The best part is licking your fingers when you are done! Shaving cream, hair gel, and paint also work well. Your child could use a cotton swab or popsicle stick instead of their fingers for the drawing. If you would like to avoid the mess, you can use any of these substances and put them in a Ziploc bag and seal it with some extra strong tape. They do the painting on top of the bag and the sticky stuff is contained inside the bag.
- Using your imagination also helps find motor skills! If you decide to have your child use shaving cream, you could pretend that it was snow. On a flat surface, spray some shaving cream and place some plastic trees or houses on top. Your child can pretend that it is a miniature snow village and drive his/her favourite cars around in it. Having the cars move in a figure eight pattern is especially beneficial for their co-ordination.
- Use tongs to pick up cotton balls, pompoms, packing peanuts, or other small items.
- Children love playdough of all colours! Your child might like to make some dough that can be turned into pretzels or cookies! (Baking with children also improves their math

skills!) Play *Simon Says* with playdough. This is a variation on the game. This time Simon wants to make dinner. Simon will give directions like Simon say, “Roll/Flatten the dough!”, etc. Use your imagination to see what Simon and your child can create!

### ***Teaching Independence and Social Skills:***

One of the main priorities of the Kindergarten program is to teach social skills and encourage children to do things on their own. At home, your child should practice dressing, eating, and using the washroom by themselves. Learning to say “please” and “thank you”, tidy up after, and wait his/her turn are valuable skills. Good manners are very important!

### ***Patterns and Number Concepts:***

Patterns are a natural part of God’s creation. From the pattern on your child’s sweater to the pattern on a monarch butterfly, it is easy to see them everywhere you look! Make sure to point them out. Counting is a pattern activity as well. Children need to memorize the order of the numbers, so frequent practice with this is important. However, memorizing a string of numbers is a limited activity if your child does not have a good understanding of what numbers are. When you are counting with you child, make sure that he/she is touching objects when doing the activity. This way your child can relate the abstract number with a concrete example. Play lots of board games, cards, or dominoes. This is a fun way to see number arrangement (such as what a group of five dots on a dice looks like).

### ***Reading:***

Reading is a critical activity to do with your child every single day. At this stage, they are not expected to read words. Start by telling your own story from the pictures in the book. As time progresses, begin to point out words that are written down in the book that relate to the story you are telling. When you do read the story to your child, model pointing to the words with your index finger as you read left to right to help re-enforce what is being taught at school. Remember, if you have a son, find non-fiction books at your library. Studies show that boys actually prefer reading non-fiction or “information” books. Please model your love of reading. Kids will be interested in reading if they see you enjoying a novel of the daily newspaper. Turn off the TV for a week and see what happens!

### ***Have fun!***

Although the foundations for schooling are being laid in Kindergarten, it is important to remember that learning must be fun and done in short bursts. The more that you can move and explore God’s creation with your child, the better. If your child senses your excitement about this amazing world, it will be contagious!

## ***What Does My Child Need for School?***

✓ **Change of clothes**

*Please send a plastic bag with an extra shirt, pants, underwear, and two pairs of socks in it on the first day of school. They will be labelled and kept at the school for emergencies.*

✓ **Indoor shoes**

*These should be non-marking, Velcro running shoes. They should be labelled with your child's name. These shoes will be kept at the school. Your child will need an additional pair of shoes for outside. In the fall and early spring, the playground can be muddy. It is recommended that you child have a pair of boots for those times in the school year.*

✓ **Back Pack**

*Your child's backpack should be big enough for a lunch box, library books, and a communication bag.*

✓ **A box of facial tissues**

*The class builds a supply at the beginning of the year so that they can be shared throughout the year.*

✓ **A towel or blanket**

*We have a brief "quiet time" each afternoon where children can look at books or simply have a little break. Please send in a towel or blanket for your child to relax on.*

✓ **A good night's rest**

*Children need at least 10 hours or more of sleep so that they are well rested and ready to learn. Having a consistent bedtime routine will help them get the sleep they need.*

**\*\*PLEASE USE A PERMANENT MARKER TO LABEL ALL BELONGINGS (RUNNING SHOES, BOOTS, COATS, BACK PACK, LUNCH BAGS, LUNCH CONTAINERS, ETC.)\*\***

# ***Kindergarten Curriculum***

## *An Integrated Curriculum*

The world is made by God. That is the foundation on which all things are taught. God has created a world and we are to take care of His creation. God has made everything to exist in relationship with one another. In order for the children to see the interconnectedness of God's creation, subject areas are often taught in an integrated fashion. This means that there is a monthly theme and many of the activities each day correspond to this theme.

## *Language*

Each week, a letter theme is introduced. We will complete various activities with that letter during class time. We use the *Jolly Phonics* program to help children learn the letters and the sounds that letters make in words. The children are taught how to form these letters through the *Handwriting Without Tears* program. They make the letters through many hands-on experiences, such as play dough or wooden blocks before putting a pencil on the page to learn the letter. Proper letter formation, where the child starts to form letters at the top of the letter is emphasized. It is important that children learn letter formation correctly from the beginning so that they build a strong foundation of good penmanship.

## *Math*

The math program is very concrete and hands-on. *Math Makes Sense* and *Quest 2000* are the two programs that are used to teach the concepts. The children will learn that God has made a world full of patterns. They are encouraged to look for patterns everywhere. They will copy some simple patterns, using a variety of materials in the classroom. They will build their understanding of number and quantity. They will frequently work on making small quantities of objects. The importance of doing this is so that they become comfortable recognizing groups of items (such as the different groupings on a die) quickly. If they can have a mental picture of a given quantity of items, it will help them with many other areas of the math curriculum.

## *Bible*

It is fundamental to Christian education that children are taught God's Word and the themes that are woven through Scripture. The Kindergarten program uses the "Walking with God and His People" curriculum to teach the Bible at a level that is developmentally appropriate. Devotions each day explore the lives of heroes of faith. Children will learn to hide God's Word in their heart by memorizing various Bible texts through weekly memory work and songs.

## ***A Typical Day in Kindergarten***

8:30am	Welcome, Washroom, Morning Activity Devotions, Music
9:00am	Bible Memory Verse Practice Journals
9:45am	Activity Centres
10:00am	Learning About Words Letter of the Week Morning Message
10:20am	Snack/Washroom/Recess
11:05am	Calendar and Counting Math Lesson
11:30am	Learning Stations
12:10pm	Physical and Health Education
1:00pm	Washroom/Lunch/Recess
1:45pm	Quiet Time or Self-Directed Reading
2:00pm	Integrated/Theme Studies
2:30pm	Activity Centres
3:00pm	Closing Prayer and Song
3:10pm	Pack up bags, Washroom, Dismissal

# ***Safety is Important***

## *Arrival/Departure*

School begins at 8:30am and ends at 3:15pm. When the bell rings all classes line up in front of the school and then are directed to enter the building. You may walk your child to the classroom and help him/her to get settled. If you arrive late, please sign your child in at the office and then proceed to the classroom.

Please come to the classroom to pick your child up at dismissal time. If you arrive after most children have been picked up, your child will be waiting in a line by the traffic circle. If you need to pick your child up early, please sign him/her out at the office before leaving the building.

## *Class Trips*

Class trips are a wonderful way to enrich the learning of children. They are a way to experience God's creation first hand. Safety on such excursions must be a priority. In order to go on such trips, chaperones are needed to transport the class. For most class trips in kindergarten, the distance travelled is not far, so parents are allowed to transport students in their personal vehicles; however, each child that is transported must have an appropriate car seat for the vehicle that they travel in. Volunteer drivers must be responsible people whose vehicles are in good repair, have appropriate vehicle and liability insurance, and who commit to safe driving practices. In order to ensure that students are safe, volunteer drivers must have a Criminal Record Check on file with the office. A letter requesting this check is available from the office and allows you to receive this document for free. The classroom teacher will ask for chaperones well in advance of each trip in order for arrangements to be made. The class trips are only for the students in the class and the chaperones. Chaperones may not bring along other children and need to make alternate arrangements for them.

## *Volunteers*

Parent volunteers are a valuable resource to the OCS community! If you are interested in helping, please contact the kindergarten teacher. It is a true blessing to have other adults in the classroom lending a helping hand to assist the children, as they become independent learners. Classroom volunteers need to have a Criminal Reference Check. If you would like to volunteer in the classroom, but are unable to come in to the school, there are several opportunities to help at home. In some circumstances, the needs of your child must also be considered. Some children act very differently when their parent is involved in their activities. Parents and teachers will work together to ensure the best possible learning environment for all of the students in the class.

# ***Classroom Routines***

## *Star Student*

Every day, there will be a star of the day! This child is the leader for the line, the helper for calendar activities, and the teacher's special assistant for the day. When it is your child's turn to be the star, they are also invited to bring in something special for "Show and Tell" time. It could be a neat toy they like to play with, a unique souvenir they brought back from somewhere special, or even something special that they made at home and want to show their friends at school. Having a Star Student is a way of honouring each child and the distinctive gifts that he/she brings to the class!

## *Snacks and Lunch*

God has given us amazing bodies and it is our responsibility to take care of them. At OCS, we strongly encourage children to eat only healthy snacks at the first nutrition break. This makes sure that they are getting a good source of energy to help them get through the day. At the second lunch break, children are allowed to have a special treat from home. It is best to have all nutritious items in the lunch so that good energy levels can be maintained throughout the day. Lunches should be "litterless" when possible. The school has a strict "**Nut-Free**" policy so it is important that your child's food follow that guideline. There are students in the school who may have severe anaphylactic reactions if they come in contact with nuts. In order for the school to be a safe environment for everyone, it is important to be respectful of the need to maintain a nut-free school. If your child has any allergies or dietary requirement, please be sure to inform the classroom teacher prior to the first day of school.

## *Recess/Playground*

All students are expected to participate in outdoor recess, weather permitting. Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately for the weather.

## *Clothing*

Children need a pair of shoes that are only used inside the school. Velcro is recommended until they can tie their own laces. During transitional times to go outside, some helpers from an older class come to help the students get ready. They help with zippers, buttons, and snowsuit management. Boots and splash pants are recommended during the spring and fall, as the playground can get quite muddy. Dressing in layers is helpful as it helps children find a way to be comfortable throughout the day. Throughout the year, there will be some special dress-up days where your child will be asked to wear something out of the ordinary. They may even get the chance to come to school in their favourite pyjamas!

### *Washrooms*

Proper hygiene is a very important skill to learn. Children are taught hand washing techniques at school but please reinforce this important habit at home as well. We are privileged to have a bathroom right in our classroom so children may use it whenever they need to. At the beginning of the year, the classroom teacher will initiate washroom and hand washing times for the class and as students gain more independence, they learn to use the washroom when needed.

### *Visiting the Library*

Each week, your child will get an opportunity to visit the school library and check out up to two books at a time. The children are usually asked to look for a book that has the letter of the week somewhere on the front cover. The following week, the book(s) are returned and a new one is picked out. Failure to return a library book may mean that your child cannot get another book out of the library until it is returned. Please keep track of your child's library books.

### *Birthdays*

Each child's birthday is celebrated in the class. For those children who have a birthday during the summer time, the class will celebrate their birthdays during the last few days of school in June. If you would like to send a special treat to school for your child to share, please make sure it is nut-free and egg-free.

Occasionally it happens that invitations for birthday parties at home are distributed at school and some boys or girls are excluded. Such exclusion causes a great deal of hurt for the uninvited child. Please do not distribute invitations at school unless all the same gender classmates (or perhaps the whole class) are invited. If you choose to invite only a few children, weekend phone calls are the best method.

### *Absences*

In the event that your child is sick or absent, please call the school. Please send a note with your child if you know ahead of time that your child will be absent on a certain day. If for some reason you have to change your child's after school pattern (e.g. not going on the bus or a different person picking them up, etc.) please send a note in your child's communication bag to inform us of the change.

## ***Progress Reports for Your Child***

During the week before school starts, there is an allotted drop-in time where you are welcome to bring your child and visit our classroom. This is an informal time for your child to meet the teacher and see the classroom. It is hoped that if you have any questions or concerns about the kindergarten program, they can be answered then. It is also important that the kindergarten teacher gets to know your son or daughter on an individual basis. This is a very special time of the year when there is some one-on-one time with teacher, student, and parent. It is a wonderful way for each person to meet and get better acquainted.

In November there is a 15 minute interview between the teacher and the parents. The focus of this meeting is how the transition to school has gone. You will hear a progress report about what has been observed in the short time that the teacher has gotten to know your child. It is an important meeting early in the year so that everyone is comfortable with the new school environment.

Before meeting in November, the first report card is sent home. This is simply an anecdotal report of the teacher's observation of what has happened in the class.

In March, there is a second parent-teacher conference. By this point in the year, the teacher will have had much more time to get to know your child and will have a more detailed assessment. The second term report card will come home before this conference.

There is a final report card that is issued on the last day of school. If concerns arise at any point, the teacher will contact the parents, through notes in the communication bag, email, phone calls, or will set up a meeting should the need to discuss matters arise. It is also important the parents are aware that they can contact the teacher at any time if they feel there is a situation that needs some extra attention.

# ***Communication with Parents/Guardians***

## ***Communications Bags***

On the first day of school, your child will receive a personalized Communication Bag to carry home notes, newsletters, homework, books from the Snuggle Up and Read program, completed work, etc. Please check your child's backpack daily and remember to send the Communication Bag back on the next day your child attends school even if it is empty. Inside the Communication Bag will be a small workbook that is our shared communication book. This book serves as a means of communication between parents and the teacher. The teacher will put reminders or observations from the day into the book and it is checked every morning to make sure that all of the questions or comments are responded to. Please do not hesitate to write a note to the teacher in the communication book if you have any matter that you wish to discuss. The teacher will always initial the book that she has read a note you have sent. If for some reason the teacher is missing your notes and they are not being initialled, please notify her via email or telephone.

## ***Weekly Update***

Each week, OCS emails out a copy of the weekly update to parents. If you require a hard copy of the weekly update, please let the office know. In this update, you will find important dates, prayer requests, school news, community news, and classroom happenings. In the classroom happenings section, you will find a brief description of what is happening in Kindergarten and any important reminders for the week.

## ***Monthly Newsletter and Calendar***

At the beginning of every month, a calendar and newsletter are sent home via email to all kindergarten parents. The newsletter will give a summary of the previous months' events and activities and may include some pictures. The monthly calendar will give an overview of the monthly theme, weekly letter themes, memory verse(s), any birthdays in the class and the Star Student for each day.

## ***What If My Child Needs Extra Help?***

Each child comes with unique gifts and abilities. It is the aim of the kindergarten program at OCS to encourage those gifts to their fullest potential. At times, some children may experience some difficulty with speech, language, fine motor skills, or other areas. The classroom teacher will notify the parent if any concerns arise at school, and the parents are encouraged to notify the classroom teacher if they have any concerns from home. It is the sincere hope of OCS that

each child will receive the help and attention they need to become all that the Lord intended them to be!

### *Building a Strong Community at OCS*

Developing a caring community is crucial to the OCS community. As members of the body of Christ, we are called to love unconditionally and to encourage and build each other up. It is the prayer of the Kindergarten teacher at OCS that your child has a unique and special year at school. Hopefully, your child will experience the love of Christ and what it means to be a part of a Christian community and the blessing that it is. May OCS be a place where your child can feel safe to learn new things. It is the beginning of a journey with each family, as we walk together to equip the mind, heart, and body of children through Christ-centred curriculum and teaching for service in the world.

“Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from Him.” Psalm 127:3