



2023-24 Parent Handbook

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Our Mission

The whole child is developed with an age-appropriate theme-based curriculum. Our program develops cognitive skills and stimulates intellectual curiosity in math, science, health, nutrition, and social studies. Perceptive abilities will be strengthened through physical and sensory development. Communication talents are enhanced through art, drama, music, and movement.

Our ultimate goal as educators is to build self-esteem. With a positive self-image, successful experiences follow. *Little Hands Preschool* (LHP) is a nurturing environment, staffed with dedicated professionals who will facilitate learning, fun and social interaction based on trust, respect and integrity.

Eligibility

Children are eligible for admission, regardless of race, color or national origin. Children with birthdays between 9/1/18 and 3/1/21 will be eligible for admission in the 2023-24 school year. *Little Hands Preschool* will open enrollment first to currently enrolled students and their siblings or alumni and then to other children in the community. Class availability is subject to change based on enrollment. Class size is limited to 10 students and is filled on a first come, first served basis.

All children should be **potty-trained**. A potty-trained child is a child who is generally able to do the following: tell an adult they need to go, manage clothing (pull down/up pants), get on and off potty with a step stool, wipe themselves, and wash their hands. "Pull ups" are permitted. (If a "Pull Up" or underwear becomes soiled with poop during school hours, a parent or guardian will be notified to come to the school to change the child.) Please pack an extra "Pull Up" or two in your child's backpack.

Brightwheel

LHP uses brightwheel an online platform and application (APP) for child care centers. Parents/caregivers or anyone who drops off or picks up your child will need the brightwheel app. We use a QR code for you to sign your child in each morning and sign them out in the afternoon. Signing your child in/out each day is mandatory and state regulated. It is an important part of the safety of our school.

Brightwheel is also used for making payments, messages from the LHP office and your teacher. Teachers will also send pictures of your child and their classmates to you from brightwheel.

Attendance

Regular attendance, along with being prompt for class, is expected and appreciated. If it is necessary for a child to be kept home, please call, email or send a brightwheel message to report his/her absence by contacting the school. There will be no make-up classes in the event of illness, vacation, or any other reason.

Daily Schedule

Our school hours are 9:30am to 1:30pm. The children rotate classes approximately every 30 minutes through the following each day: Discovery, Circle Time, Table Time, Arts & Crafts, Lunchtime, Recess/Outdoor Play. Lessons and activities are based on monthly themes and three letters each month. A list of themes and letters are on our website and a hard copy will be distributed by your teacher.

Enrichment Classes

Enrichment classes such as cooking, fitness, art, STEM or yoga will be offered Mon-Thur from 1:30PM-2:30pm. Registration for these classes will begin in September. You can choose one, two, three or four days a week. Enrichment classes are open to children in the 3,4 and 5-day classes.

Illness Policy

For your child's benefit and the safety of all the children & staff at our school, please do not send a child to school at LHP with ANY illness. If your child has had a fever, they MUST be fever free (without fever reducing medication) for at least 24 hours before they can return to school. Do not send a child to school that has had diarrhea or who has vomited within the last 24 hours. Please see our Health Policy document for more details.

Allergies

If your child has any allergies to foods, please let us know before starting school. Our school *allows* peanut products in lunches. If your child has any food allergies, please talk to the LHP Director and your child's teacher about any special accommodations needed. We require TWO Epi-Pens to be left at school if your child requires an Epi Pen for allergies.

A medication authorization form (OCC-1216 – available on our website) must be completed by the child's parent/doctor for any child requiring the administration of any medication during the preschool day.

Medicine must be in the original container, unopened, and, if prescription, contain the original pharmacy label. Students are not allowed to carry medication or administer to themselves.

Backpacks/Folders/Lunchboxes

Please send your child with a backpack or tote bag each day. Inside there should be a complete change of clothing including: shirt, pants, underwear or emergency Pull Ups, and socks. A lunchbox with a healthy lunch inside and a water bottle. Your teacher will give you a folder that they will use to send home papers and other important documents. Please make sure to check your child's folder **DAILY** and remove papers that are sent home. Please try to purchase a backpack that will fit all of these items easily. Small backpacks are not a good choice and hard for your child and staff to put items inside of. Please make sure the water bottle you send does not leak when turned on its side.

Tuition

Tuition is calculated annually and collected in 9 monthly installments. Please refer to the tuition rates as stated on our registration form and website. No credit, refund or reduction in tuition will be allowed in the event of illness, vacation, pandemic, Or Chadash special event, snow days or any other reason. Payments can be made via brightwheel, check or cash. Please make checks payable to: ***Little Hands Preschool*** and write the student's name in the memo section.

If the payment due date falls on a weekend or other non-class day, please submit your payment prior to the 1st. Tuition submitted after the due date must include a \$25.00 late fee. Siblings receive a 10% tuition discount applied to the 2nd (or subsequent) child's tuition rate.

Communication

Communication between teachers, the school and parents is so important! Please read all emails/brightwheel messages and mark any important dates on your calendar. Be sure to check your email regularly and the door of your child's class each day for important notes from the teacher. Teachers will send weekly emails or brightwheel messages with reminders and upcoming events.

Arrival/Dismissal

The front doors of our building will open at 9:25am. Teachers will begin accepting students at 9:25am with class instruction starting promptly at 9:35am. Please use the brightwheel QR codes that are located on the front door and on the tables in the school lobby to sign your child **IN** to school

At 9:35am the front door of the building we be closed/locked. If you arrive after this time, please ring the RING doorbell located by the front door to be let in. Do *not* press the button/bell to contact the Or Chadash office. For security purposes, the Or Chadash staff are not permitted to let anyone into the building.

The children will dismiss from class promptly at 1:30pm or 2:30pm(enrichment) Please use the brightwheel QR codes to sign your child **OUT** of school. Children **MUST** be picked-up on time. Please make every effort to be on time for pick-up.

When a child's parent/guardian does not appear at the expected time, children can experience feelings of stress, worry, fear, etc. We understand that occasionally unexpected circumstances arise. If you know you are running late, please call our office immediately to notify us of your anticipated time of pick-up. It is helpful for us to know in advance so we can help your child adjust to the late departure and plan for staff supervision during this time.

If you are late to pick-up an automatic late fee of \$10 will be charged for the first 5 minutes with an additional \$1 per minute thereafter. Children will not be released to anyone other than the parent/guardian or persons listed on emergency contact list without a written note/email from their parent in advance.

*Responsibility for your child passes to *Little Hands Preschool* once you drop your child off with their teacher and ends when you pick up your child at the classroom door. Please monitor your children while in the building, in the parking lot and anywhere on the property. Discourage running in the building, climbing on furniture in the lobby, unsafe behavior in the parking lot, or destructive behavior to property in or around our building such as trees and shrubs. Children may not be unattended anywhere on the property before or after class hours (this includes the bathroom, outside in front of the building or on the playground).

Discipline Policy

Learning self-control and discipline is a normal part of growing up. *Little Hands Preschool* uses a positive approach to discipline by directing children toward age-appropriate behavior. Teachers help children develop self-discipline by using positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior choices, redirecting the child, using patience, love and understanding, setting clearly defined limits, and talking about acceptable ways of handling situations as they arise. Most situations can be handled by redirecting the child to another more appropriate activity. If the teacher is unable to curb inappropriate behavior with the above-mentioned techniques, the child will be briefly separated from the group until his/her behavior warrants coming back to the group. A walk down the hall way with an adult can often help.

The safety of the students in our school is our primary concern. Students biting, hitting, scratching or behaving in any manner which causes physical or emotional harm is a serious matter. If any of these behaviors occur, parents will be promptly notified. *Little Hands Preschool* reserves the right to remove students from the program for any length of time if unsafe behavior/language cannot be corrected. We will document incidents, have parent conferences and make every effort to correct the issues before dismissing the student from our program.

Screen Time Policy

Little Hands Preschool does not use any computers or any type of screen devices with the children on a daily basis. From time to time, we will have a fun day where the class may watch a movie or show usually educational in nature.

Clothing

Children should wear comfortable play clothes and all removable articles of clothing should be labeled. Clothing may get stained during art and/or outside activities. Putting a change of clothing in your child's backpack/bag is required (be sure to include shirt, pants, underwear, socks and shoes, if possible). Except in extreme weather, the children will go outside every day. Please provide the appropriate attire for the expected weather conditions. Children wearing dresses are asked to wear tights/ leggings if it is cold out. In warmer weather, if a dress is worn, please have your child wear shorts under the dress. We discourage heeled shoes and closed toed shoes are best for our playground because the surface is wood chips.

LHP is not responsible for any items from home that are lost or misplaced.

Food at School

It is important that you inform us immediately if your child has any food allergies or food restrictions. Teachers may incorporate food items into lessons (counting, sorting) and have cooking activities throughout the year. If needed, your teacher will communicate with you ahead of these lessons to obtain your permission. Parents may send in special snacks for birthdays (see below), holidays etc. Although learning how to share is an important skill in preschool, we do not allow sharing of food at lunchtime. Please do not send in any treats for your child's lunch bag with the intention of them sharing with his/her classmates. Always contact your child's teacher ahead of time if you would like to send in edible items for the class.

Lunch

Parents are to supply all lunch items (including a beverage, utensils, napkin etc.) in a lunch bag clearly labeled with your child's name. We encourage packing a healthy lunch. Please limit candy and sugary snacks. Lunch time with classmates is a fun and exciting part of the school day. It is often a high energy time with lots of talking, laughing, singing, trips to the trash can and overall silliness that happens all while consuming their lunch.

For safety reasons, we ask that you refrain from sending foods that are known to be a choking hazard for young children. These foods include, but are not limited to, hot dogs, grapes, and baby carrots. If you must pack these, they must be cut into quarters so that the pieces are not "coin shaped". **We will not allow a student to consume these foods if they are not appropriately cut up.** In addition, we caution against popcorn and many of the fruit leather snacks (i.e., Fruit by the Foot, Fruit Roll-ups) as they are often consumed in an unsafe manner by young children.

In accordance with Or Chadash's Kosher policy for the building, please do not pack any pork products such as ham, pepperoni, salami, hot dogs (unless they are made with beef or turkey) or shell fish (crab, shrimp, lobster). In addition, you may not mix meat products and dairy products in the same container. Thank you for your cooperation.

Birthday Celebrations

We love celebrating birthdays at school. As your child's birthday approaches, please discuss with your child's teacher a convenient day to celebrate at school. We celebrate birthdays at lunchtime or the end of the day. Sending in a special child-sized snack or dessert to enjoy after their lunch is a big hit. Treats should be store bought. Some examples are mini cupcakes, donuts, ice cream cups. Please NO balloons or candles. If you would like to give out goodie bags you are welcome to put them in the other children's backpacks at pick up. We are happy to distribute party invitations for you only if all students in the class are being invited. Summer birthdays may be celebrated at the end of the school year in May/June. *Please note that as some students may have allergies or other food concerns, it is important to speak with your child's teacher well in advance of your celebration day. If a parent would like to come in on the day of the child's birthday celebration at LHP you are welcome to join us during the treat celebration and recess. Please arrange with your teacher in advance.

Volunteers / Visiting the Class

Parents, grandparents and guardians are welcome to visit our school at any time. If you would like to be a volunteer in the classroom on a regular basis, please see Mrs. Davis. Volunteering may be limited during the beginning weeks of the school year while students are adjusting to the new school routine.

* For safety purposes, siblings (younger or older) are not permitted in the classroom during the school day with the exception of accompanying a parent to attend a student's special birthday celebration (siblings are permitted on these days during the birthday celebration time or to attend a school wide special event. *Any visiting child must be supervised by their parent / guardian at all times.* Under no circumstance should any child not currently enrolled in our school be left with a staff member.

Field trips

We try to have a few field trips each year. Some field trips are "in house" where we bring the event to the school, and others are "off-site" where we require parents to accompany their children. Most "off-site" field trips are appropriate for younger siblings to attend and, in addition, require a nominal attendance fee. We will announce field trip dates/times with as much notice as possible so that schedules can be arranged accordingly.

Evaluations/Records

Written evaluations are sent home in November and June. In late November, you will receive a brief progress update. In June, you will receive a more detailed report and assessment of your child's individual skills. Student records are available for review by parents/guardians upon request and a written release must be signed if records are to be released to anyone else. You may request a Teacher/Parent meeting at any time.

Holidays/Snow Days

We will follow Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) schedule for holidays, days off and snow days. If MCPS schools are closed due to inclement weather or any other reason, then *Little Hands Preschool* will be closed. If MCPS opens 2 hours late, *Little Hands Preschool* will open at 11:30am and dismiss at 2:30pm. If MCPS has an early dismissal due to weather, *Little Hands Preschool* will close at 12:30pm. On MCPS scheduled ½ days, *Little Hands Preschool* hours will remain the same.

Emergency Release Form

Upon admission to *Little Hands Preschool*, the parent/guardian must sign an emergency release form. In the event that a parent cannot be reached, those individuals listed as your emergency contacts will be called. Please list at least TWO emergency contacts that are local to the LHP area and able to pick up your child if you cannot be reached. It is very important that you keep your cell phone on and with you during the school day while your child is in our care. If there is any type of emergency or illness, we need to be able to reach you. If a medical emergency occurs at school, the parent/guardian will be called first, then the child's doctor. If we cannot reach the child's parents, the names on the emergency contact form will be called. The school will proceed with necessary medical procedures until a parent/guardian can be notified.

Immunizations

Children must have the state required immunizations. A child who does not have the required immunizations will not be allowed to attend school until those immunizations have been administered or the appropriate exemption documentation has been submitted.

Parking Lot

Please drive slowly at all times! This cannot be stressed enough. We have a busy parking lot with many young children coming and going. Please stay to the right where the parking lot splits as this is a one-way traffic area. **Use the sidewalks when arriving and leaving our building.** If necessary, please hold your child's hand when walking to and from the building. When dropping off or picking up your child from school, **please do not park in the first 3 "reserved" spots in the parking lot under any circumstances.** These are reserved for the staff of Or Chadash Synagogue.

Or Chadash Synagogue

Or Chadash has welcomed the tenancy of *Little Hands Preschool* since 2007. They have allowed us full use of the building and outdoor property. We ask that you help support the positive relationship between *Little Hands Preschool* and Or Chadash by respecting their building, belongings, and outside property (including landscaping) at all times. Parents will be responsible for any damage their children cause to the property.

Maryland Office of Child Care

All child care in Maryland is regulated by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Early Childhood Development. Within the Division, child care licensing is the specific responsibility of the Office of Child Care (OCC), Licensing Branch. You may contact the Montgomery County OCC Regional Office at 240-314-1400. For further information regarding the requirements, rules or regulations of a child care facility in Maryland, please refer to "**A Parent's Guide to Regulated Childcare**" which can be viewed on our school's website.

Thank you for taking the time to read this valuable information about our school.

You have one more thing to do!

Please complete and submit the Parent Contract (that has been provided to you by email) This document must be signed and will serve as confirmation that you have read this Parent Handbook and understand all the rules/policies stated herein.



Looking forward to a wonderful school year!

~ The Little Hands Preschool Staff ~