



Preschool & VPK Parent Handbook

2024-2025

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Welcome to Montessori Village Green at Odyssey Charter School,
🌀 Florida's First High Performance, Healthy "Green" School 🌀

Mission Statement

The mission of Odyssey Charter School is to work in partnership with the family and communities, with the aim of helping each child reach full potential in all areas of life.

Vision Statement

We seek to educate the whole child with the understanding that each person must achieve a balance of intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual and social skills as a foundation for life.

School Location

Montessori Village Green is located on the campus of Odyssey Charter School Elementary, 1755 Eldron Blvd. SE. Our four Preschool and VPK classrooms implement the Montessori Method, Pre-K Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum and a classical approach to early childhood learning.

Dear Preschool Families,

It is a great honor to serve your children at Montessori Village Green. If at any time during the upcoming school year you would like to speak to me about your child's progress, or if you have any concerns, please feel free to contact me. I am here to support you and your family. Thank you for choosing Montessori Village Green for your child's early education.

In Partnership,

Alia Hartwick

Preschool and Enrichment Director

Email: HartwickA@odysseycharterschool.com Phone: 321-733-0442 ext. 214

Message from the Founder

Welcome to our Montessori Early Childhood Program! We are delighted to welcome you and your child to our community dedicated to helping each child reach their full potential in all areas of life, by working in partnership with the family and the community. At Montessori Village Green, we are committed to providing an environment that fosters not only academic excellence, but also social, emotional, spiritual, and physical development.

Through the Montessori philosophy, we strive to nurture independence, curiosity, and a passion for lifelong learning in every child. Our carefully selected materials and hands-on learning experiences are designed to empower children to explore, discover, and grow at their own pace. With guidance from our dedicated educators, your child will have the opportunity to develop creativity, critical thinking skills, and a strong sense of self-confidence.

As partners in your child's education, we value open communication and collaboration between home and school. As we embark upon this education journey together, we hope to inspire and support your child with the aim of helping them flourish into confident, compassionate, and capable individuals. Welcome to our Montessori family, where every child's potential is celebrated and nurtured!

Warm Regards,

*Ms. Constance
Odyssey Founder*

Contact Information

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Introduction to Montessori Method

Dr. Maria Montessori was an Italian physician, educator, and innovator, acclaimed for her educational method that builds on the way children naturally learn. The Montessori Method of education, developed by Maria Montessori, is a child-centered educational approach based on scientific observations of children from birth to adulthood. It is a view of the child as one who is naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environment.

Maria's early medical practice focused on psychiatry. She also developed an interest in education, attending classes on pedagogy and immersing herself in educational theory. Her studies led her to observe, and call into question, the prevailing methods of teaching children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In 1907, Maria accepted a new challenge to open a childcare center with a quality learning environment for young children in a poor inner-city district. This became the first Montessori school, named Casa dei Bambini, or Children's House, in Rome. The children soon showed great interest in working with puzzles, learning to prepare meals, and manipulating materials that held lessons in math. She observed how they absorbed knowledge from their surroundings, essentially teaching themselves. Utilizing scientific observation and experience gained from her earlier work with young children, Maria designed learning materials and a classroom environment that fostered the children's natural desire to learn. News of the schools success soon spread through Italy and by 1910 Montessori schools were acclaimed throughout many countries. Dr. Montessori traveled the world and wrote extensively about her approach to education, attracting many devotees. There are now more than 22,000 Montessori school in at least 110 countries worldwide.

Dr. Montessori observed that children experience sensitive periods, or windows of opportunity, as they grow. As their students develop, Montessori teachers match appropriate lessons and materials to these sensitive periods when learning is most naturally absorbed and internalized. The teacher, child, and environment create a learning triangle. The classroom is prepared by the teacher to encourage independence, freedom within limits, and a sense of order. The child, through individual choice, makes use of what the environment offers to develop himself, interacting with the teacher when support and/or guidance is needed. Because the teacher isn't meant as the focus of attention, she can often be difficult to spot. Typically you'll find her sitting on the floor or at a table, observing her students as they work and making notations about their progress, or consulting with an individual or a small group. Throughout the room, children will be sorting, stacking, and manipulating all sorts of beautiful objects made of a range of materials and textures. Many of these objects will be made of smooth polished wood. Others are made of enameled metal, wicker, and fabric. Montessori teachers believe that children learn from their mistakes. If nothing ever breaks, children have no reason to learn carefulness. Montessori teachers make a point to handle Montessori materials slowly, respectfully, and carefully, as if they were made of gold. The children naturally sense something magical about these beautiful learning materials.

The design and flow of the Montessori classroom create a learning environment that accommodates choice. There are spaces suited for a group activity, and areas where a student can settle in alone. Parts of the room are open and spacious, allowing a preschooler to lay out strands of beads for counting. Children work at tables or on the floor, rolling out mats on which to work and define their work space. There are well-defined spaces for each part of the curriculum, such as Language Arts, Math, and Culture. Each of these areas features shelves or display tables with a variety of inviting materials from which students can choose. Each classroom is uniquely suited to the needs of its students. Preschool rooms feature low sinks, chairs, and tables; a reading corner with comfy cushions; reachable shelves; and child-sized kitchen tools—elements that allow independence and help develop small motor skills. A hallmark of Montessori education is its hands-on approach to learning. Students work with specially designed materials, manipulating and investigating until they master the lesson inside. The beautifully crafted Montessori learning materials are displayed on open, easily accessible shelves. They are arranged in order of their sequence in the curriculum, from the simplest to the most complex. Each material teaches a single skill or concept at a time. The concrete materials provide passages to abstraction, and introduce concepts that become increasingly complex. As students progress, the teacher replaces some materials with others, ensuring that the level of challenge continues to meet their needs.

Each child is valued as a unique individual. Montessori education recognizes that children learn in different ways, and accommodates all learning styles. Students are also free to learn at their own pace, each advancing through the curriculum as he is ready, guided by the teacher and an individualized learning plan. Beginning at an early age, Montessori students develop order, coordination, concentration, and independence. Classroom design, materials, and daily routines support the individual's emerging "self-regulation" (ability to educate one's self, and to think about what one is learning), toddlers through adolescents. Given the freedom and support to question, to probe deeply, and to make connections, Montessori students become confident, enthusiastic, self-directed learners.

Source: American Montessori Society; Montessori Education; amshq.org

MVG Daily Classroom Schedule

Full Day Montessori/VPK Program

- 8:20 Arrival Time
- 8:30 Class Begins / Students Unpack
- 8:45-9:10 Morning Group Time/ Outdoor Play
- 9:10-11:30 Morning Work Cycle / Snack
- 11:30-2:00 Lunch / Rest Time
- 2:00-3:20 Afternoon Work Cycle / Snack / Outdoor Play
- 3:30 Dismissal

Schedule may vary depending on classroom

VPK Morning Program

- 8:20 Arrival Time
- 8:30 Class Begins / Students Unpack
- 8:45-9:00 Morning Group Time
- 9:00-11:30 Morning Work Cycle / Snack / Outdoor Play
- 11:30 Dismissal

VPK Afternoon Program

- 12:20 Arrival Time
- 12:30 Class Begins / Students Unpack
- 12:45-1:00 Afternoon Group Time
- 1:00-3:30 Afternoon Work Cycle / Snack / Outdoor Play
- 3:30 Dismissal

Arrival & Dismissal Procedures

Because we strive to maintain a prepared environment for your children, teachers are unable to meet with parents in the morning without a prescheduled appointment.

Morning Arrival Procedures

At 8:20am we will begin accepting children into the building. Please park in the green lot or in another space close to the building (do not utilize the fire lane). If your child is in class **203 or 206** please walk your child to the 1st wing's set of double doors. Classes **306 and 308**, please walk your child to the double doors at the end of the building. Please do not allow your child to walk to the doors unescorted. You may check your child in with your Procure app or on the tablet provided by the teachers.

As a safety precaution, school doors are locked promptly at 8:30am. If you arrive after 8:30am, you will need to park your car and walk your child into the front office. The front office will call for the Assistant Director or Director to assist you in signing your student in for the day. ***Please make every effort to be on time as tardiness disrupts the morning routine of the classroom.*** Dependent upon the program your child is enrolled in, class either begins at 8:30am or 12:30pm. Being on time is essential to the well being of your child and others in the classroom. ***Your child will not be permitted to the morning class if they arrive after 9:00am or after 1:00pm for the afternoon class without a doctor's note.***

Dismissal Procedures

AM Class II:30am Morning Dismissal

Children will be dismissed from the classroom at 11:30am. Please park in the green lot, and pick your child up from the same set of doors in which you dropped off. Teachers will open the doors and invite one child at a time to come to the door and meet their adult. You will sign your child out using the Procure app or with a pin number provided by Procure. All adults picking children up, must submit photo identification to the teacher, unless they have a pin number. Please do not share your pin number with anyone. If you need to add someone to your pickup list, please notify the Director in writing and either hand it to your child's teacher, or email it along with a picture of YOUR driver license. Children will not be released to any adults who are not authorized on the registration form. ***There will be a charge of \$1.00 per minute for VPK students who are not picked up by 11:40am.***

Full Day & PM Classes 3:30pm Afternoon Dismissal

Children will be dismissed at 3:30pm. Please park in the green lot, and pick up your child from the same set of doors in which you dropped off. Teachers will open the doors and invite one child at a time to come to the door and meet their adult. You will sign your child out using the Procure app or with a pin number provided by Procure. All adults picking children up, must submit photo identification to the teacher, unless they have a pin number. Please do not share your pin number with anyone. If you need to add someone to your pickup list, please notify the teacher in writing and either hand it to your child's teacher, or email it along with a picture of YOUR driver license. Children will not be released to any adults who are not authorized on the registration form. ***There will be a charge of \$1.00 per minute for VPK students who are not picked up by 3:40pm and the student will be sent to aftercare.***

Absence Policy

If a child will be absent from the school, please send a message in the Procure app. Students enrolled in Montessori Village Green are asked to maintain regular attendance. VPK students should not exceed 3 absences per month without a doctor's note. **Students who have excessive absences without a doctor's note will be excused from the program.**

Before and After Care Enrichment Program

The Odyssey Charter School Enrichment program offers Before Care from 6:00am-8:30am and Aftercare from 3:30pm-6:30pm. Children enrolled in the **morning VPK program** may sign up for before care. There is a separate registration form to attend. Children enrolled in the **afternoon VPK program** may sign up for after care. There is a separate registration form to attend. Children who attend the **full day program** may attend before and after care at no extra cost. A separate registration form is required. Registration forms are available through the school's front office or may be downloaded from our website. All registration paperwork and registration fees must be received by the enrichment office prior to your child attending either program.

School Closure Procedures Hurricane

Montessori Village Green will follow the Brevard Public School closings for hurricanes. The school will contact families in the event that our re-opening is delayed due to storm damage. Otherwise, the school will follow the Brevard Public School's opening date. If the school is closed due to another unforeseen event, every effort to contact the families would be made. Information may also be shared via email and on the Montessori Village Green social media Facebook page, or through Procure.

Health Policies

Sick Student Policy

Children may not come to school if they have:

- Fever of 100.4 or higher (children must be fever-free for 24 hours without medication before returning to school)
- Green discharge from their nose or eyes
- Lice
- Sore throat
- Uncontrollable coughing
- Vomited in the last 24 hours
- Conjunctivitis
- Rash
- Any contagious disease

If children present any of the above symptoms after arriving at school, the student will be sent to the school's health technician and the parents will be contacted to pick up their child. A doctor's note may be required depending on symptoms. Depending on the severity of symptoms, children may be waiting in the Director's office until parents arrive. Parents have **30 minutes** to arrive for pickup. If the parent works a long distance away, this should be communicated during the phone call.

Student Injuries or Incidents

We strive to keep every child safe at our school. Occasionally, students may get minor bumps, scrapes or scratches. When this occurs, the student is asked to wash the area with soap and water and a Band-Aid or ice may be applied. If a student sustains a more serious injury, the student will be taken to the school's health technician and the parents will be contacted. An incident report will be created in Procure and signed by the teacher, parent and school director. Parents have access to reports under their students "activity list".

Medication Procedures

All medication must be checked in with the school health technician through the school's front office. Parents will be given a form to fill out and sign. Medication must be in the original container with the dispensing information clearly labeled. Any non-prescription medication must be accompanied by a doctor's note specifying dosage and medication instructions. At no time should children have possession of any type of prescription or over-the-counter medication.

Classroom Procedures

Classroom expectations for the children

- Children will use inside voices when working in the indoor environment.
- Children will use walking feet when working in the indoor environment.
- Children will help to maintain a safe environment by listening and following the instructions of their teachers.
- Children will treat the materials carefully.
- Children will only use Montessori materials in the classroom after the teacher has presented a lesson.
- Children will help maintain order in the environment by replacing materials on the shelves after they are finished working.
- Children will show respect toward their friends by walking around rugs that are used for working.
- Children will not disturb the work of another friend who is working.

Classroom expectations for the teacher

- Teachers will provide a safe, positive environment for your child to learn and grow.
- Teachers will present individual lessons to your children weekly that meet their developmental period of readiness.
- Teachers will meet with parents two times each year to discuss their child's progress in the Montessori program.
- Teachers will respond to all concerns expressed by the parents in a timely manner.
- Teachers will communicate openly and respectfully to parents concerning the needs of their child.
- Teachers will form a partnership with the parents that will provide continuity of the Montessori beliefs and values of a child centered education.

Expectations for the parents

- Parents will drop their children off to school each day on time.
- Parents will feed their children a healthy breakfast each morning before school.
- Parents will send in written correspondence detailing any environmental changes at home that will impact the child's receptiveness to learning at school.
- Parents will maintain open, honest, and respectful communication with the teachers.
- Parents will attend parent-teacher conferences at least one time each school year.
- Parents will promptly read and respond to all school-to-home communications.
- Parents will express any program concerns to the Director.

Classroom lessons and materials

- Lessons are given individually or in small group.
- Lessons are presented in sequential order, from concrete to abstract.
- Each lesson in a Montessori classroom has multiple values.
- Each lesson is practiced by the child until it is mastered.
- Once a lesson is mastered, the next lesson is presented to the child.
- Children may receive extensions of lessons they have mastered.
- Children will receive lessons in practical life, sensorial, language, mathematics, science and geography.

Classroom Supplies

Families of children who attend *full-day* will pay a material fee prior to attending. Families of *half-day* students will receive a supply list at the beginning of the school year. We consider the classroom supply list to be a suggestion for donations that will be used throughout the school year in the classroom. All families may be asked for school donations when supplies run low. We appreciate your contribution to our program!

Classroom Dress Code

Students at Montessori Village Green are not required to wear a school uniform. Children should wear loose fitting clothing with elastic waist bands that they can pull down and up without assistance. Girls who wear dresses or skirts should wear shorts underneath. All children must wear closed toed shoes. We do not permit sandals, flip-flops, crocs, cowboy boots or high heeled shoes. We do not permit appearance or attire that may distract from learning, including, but not limited to, sneakers with flashing lights, play pretend dress up clothes worn to school and the wearing of makeup.

Classroom Pets

Some classrooms may choose to have a class pet. The teachers will make sure these pets are in good health and are suitable for contact with children. Teachers will also supervise all interactions between children and animals and provide instruction on safe behavior prior to any interaction. Children with animal specific allergies will not be exposed to those animals. Please be sure to include these allergies on your child's registration form and update as needed.

Toilet Training

Children attending Montessori Village Green must be fully toilet trained. Children will be responsible to use the bathroom without prompting, pull pants down and up without assistance, wipe themselves without assistance, flush the toilet, wash their hands with soap and water, dry their hands with a paper towel and throw the paper towel away in the trash can. We recommend that you allow your child to do these activities independently at home. This will give them the self-confidence and practice to be successful at school.

If a child enters Montessori Village Green and they are not fully toilet trained, the child may be asked to withdraw until training is complete.

Snack and Lunches

A snack sign up will be available to you at the start of the school year with the dates of when to bring a healthy snack to share with the children in your child's classroom. Please be sure to send enough for **100** students each time. This allows for children to have snack all five days of the week. A specific list of snack choices is available by request to your child's teacher. Odyssey Charter School has a steadfast policy on only providing children with healthy food choices that will give them nutritional building blocks, enabling them perform at their highest potential. The school's full Wellness Policy is available for review on our website: www.odysseycharterschool.com *Montessori Village Green does not allow children to eat candy, cookies, snack cakes, or soda. Please do not send prepackaged lunchables, high sugar fruit snacks, chips or drinks that are high in sugar in your child's lunch.*

Snack and Lunches *Continued*

If you are enrolled in the full day program, lunch will be provided from the school cafeteria for your child. Children will eat “family style” at tables. This allows for children to learn table manners and have lively conversation during lunch. We encourage families to eat family style with their children at home as well. If you pack a lunch for your child, we recommend that it contain healthy foods such as: fresh fruit, vegetables with dip, whole grain crackers, cheese, hard boiled eggs, granola bars or graham crackers. We also ask that you send in a refillable, labeled water bottle with your child each day. All packed lunches should be sent in a thermal lunch box with a small ice pack to keep the food fresh. Lunch boxes and any containers in the lunch box should be labeled with your child’s first and last name and your teacher’s name.

Parent and Teacher Conferences

Parent - Teacher Conferences will be conducted twice a year. Our first conference is in the fall and our second conference is in the spring. Parents are expected to attend both conferences. Additional conferences may be arranged by emailing your child’s teacher for an appointment. Parents are encouraged to come to the conferences with a list of questions or concerns about their child. Children *may not* attend Parent Teacher Conferences. Please choose a time in which you will have arranged care for your child.

Home to School Communications

The most effective way to communicate with your teachers is via email or Procure. The Preschool and Enrichment Director, Alia Hartwick, can be contacted by phone at 321-733-0422 x 214 or by email at HartwickA@odysseycharterschool.com. Additionally, you may contact the Assistant Director, Nina Memoli at LucchiniN@odysseycharterschool.com or by phone at 321-733-0442 x 215.

If you have an urgent matter, we encourage you to speak directly with the Director.

Changes in Home Environment

The primary goal of Montessori Village Green is to provide a safe and supportive environment for you child. If your child is experiencing difficulties at home that may transition to school we would like to partner with you to help your child develop self-help skills and positively modify their behavior. Your ongoing communication with the Director and the teachers will help us accomplish these goals.

Open Door Policy

Montessori Village Green maintains an open-door policy for all parents and guardians of children who are enrolled in our program. We encourage parents to sign up as a mystery reader, or volunteer in the classroom. We do ask visitors to follow the classroom routine and to avoid disturbing classroom schedules and activities. The teachers will always remain responsible for the students’ health and safety. All visitors are required to check in with the office before proceeding to the classroom. If you wish to meet with the Director or a staff member, please contact the office to make an appointment.

Discipline Policy and Procedures

Montessori Village Green uses the Montessori Method to guide children to be independent learners. “Dr. Montessori felt that the goal of early childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts from a pre-selected course of studies, but rather to cultivate her own natural desire to learn” (Wolf, 1995). Creating a learning environment for children that is peaceful and inviting requires the children to have a concrete understand of classroom expectations. The first lesson that children receive at Montessori Village Green is “care of the environment”. Children will be given examples of how to handle Montessori materials, how to walk carefully in the classroom and how to respect the work space of their friends. These classroom procedures are reinforced daily with gentle redirection by the teachers.

Children who develop behavior problems are first redirected gently by the teachers. The teacher will make sure that the child understands the classroom procedure and then will help the child make a different choice. If the child is unable or unwilling to make a different choice the teacher will allow the child to sit quietly until they are ready to return to their work. The child will initiate their own return to work, which allows the child to independently self-correct their behavior. Children are not subjected to discipline that is severe, humiliating or frightening. Discipline is never associated with food, rest, or toileting. Spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited. Children may not be denied active play as a consequence of misbehavior.

In instances where a child’s behavior is disruptive to the classroom environment, the student will be asked to sit near the teacher/s or hold the teacher’s hand. Children who pose a threat to the other children or to the environment will be removed from the environment by the director. The preschool director will work with the child and allow the child to express his/her feelings and concerns. The preschool director will then assist the teacher in determining an appropriate work area for the child.

If intervention by the preschool director is not successful, the teacher or preschool director will call the child’s parents or guardians to set up a conference. Our goal for all parent-teacher conferences is to collaborate and find a solution that will help the child work successfully in the Montessori environment. During the conference, we will discuss the teacher’s and director’s observation of the child’s behavior. Then we will ask the parents to provide feedback about similar behaviors the child may be exhibiting at home. Finally, we will determine a behavior plan that will consistently address the behavior issues at home and at school.

If the child continues to repetitively exhibit inappropriate behaviors after the parent-teacher conference, another conference will be called. The preschool director, parents and teacher will review the child’s behavior at school and at home. All parties will review the existing behavior plan and set up alternate consequences for inappropriate behavior. If the behavior occurs again within the following two-week period the child may be withdrawn from the Montessori program. ***Montessori Village Green reserves the right to immediately expel a child at any time if a child exhibits uncontrollable behavior that cannot be modified by staff or if he-she begins to exhibit behavior which is harmful to him/herself or others. A parent will be called to pick up the child immediately.***

Before and after care enrichment has a separate discipline policy. Please see the enrichment form. Repetitive negative behaviors in enrichment may result in the child being unenrolled.

Odyssey Charter School Kindergarten Program

Articulation Agreement

Students who successfully complete the VPK program at Montessori Village Green are eligible to articulate into Odyssey’s Kindergarten program. Parents will need to fill out a “Letter of Intent to Enroll” and an application in January.

“Charter schools are open to all students residing within the district; however, charter schools are allowed to target students within specific age groups or grade levels, students considered at-risk of dropping out or failing, students wishing to enroll in a charter school-in-the-workplace or charter school-in-a-municipality, students residing within a reasonable distance of the school, students who meet reasonable academic, artistic or other eligibility standards established by the charter school, or students articulating from one charter school to another. Additionally, a charter school may give enrollment preference to the following student populations - students who have successfully completed a voluntary prekindergarten program provided by the charter school during the previous year.”

Source: Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice, www.floridaschoolchoice.org/