

helping PAWS handbook

WELCOME
to
TCS



Lions' Pride!

A Message from the Head of School . . .

Welcome to The Christ School! We are blessed to count you as members of our school community, and I look forward to the great things God has in store for us all during our educational journey together.

It is our prayer that all new families feel welcomed, informed and involved. Starting a new school is a milestone in the lives of students and their families, and we want to help you know how to get started at TCS. That's what this handbook is all about. It was written by parents, for parents, and it offers some great advice and tips. I hope you'll find it useful, and I also hope you'll let us know what we should add for future new families.

Please feel free to call on me or any member of our TCS family – faculty, staff and other parents, too – when you have questions or need help. I wish you a wonderful year!

In Christ,

Jason W. Powell, Ed.D.
Head of School

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***Special thanks to TCS student Maddie Scott,
who designed the cover for this handbook.***

Ready to Roar ... Preparing for School

There are a few important things you can do to set your child and family up for a roaring success at The Christ School. Here are some tips for getting ready for the year.

Summer Programs

- 🐾 TCS offers a week-long summer program for students who are starting kindergarten or entering grades 1-8.
- 🐾 New students especially benefit from spending time on campus before the school year starts, meeting new friends and teachers, and finding their way around.
- 🐾 For incoming kindergartners, KinderExpress is a great introduction to school, and it comes highly recommended by families who have taken part.
 - KinderExpress is an ideal way for the children to spend time in a kindergarten classroom with a teacher and get ready for the year ahead.
 - The children meet future classmates, become familiar with the daily routine, get to know teachers, practice bringing lunch, enjoy the playground and more.
- 🐾 See the school's website or talk with the office staff for details.

School Supplies

- 🐾 For school supplies, you have two options:
 - The Christ School's Parent Teacher Fellowship (PTF) sells prepackaged school supplies. Most parents choose this option for the convenience of having the right supplies sent directly to the classroom for the first day. Look for an order form on the website.
 - You can also buy the items yourself and have your child bring them the first day of school. The school will send a list in advance. (Note: This can be a time-consuming task.)
- 🐾 Kindergartners need to buy a TCS rest mat from the school office and bring it on the first day. (Using an older sibling's former TCS rest mat is fine.)
- 🐾 Children should come to school with a backpack. Kindergartners can use a regular-size backpack.
- 🐾 Lunchboxes are a good idea if you plan to pack lunches. Ice packs and thermoses can help keep food hot or cold. Remember to send utensils (can be disposable), a beverage and a napkin.

Helping Paws Tip:

Check out the school's website, thechristschool.org, for lots of great information.

School Uniforms

- 🐾 For complete information about the TCS uniform policy, visit the school's web site.
- 🐾 Plan to buy uniforms a few weeks before school starts so you get the sizes and styles you need.
- 🐾 It's a good idea to go to Dennis Uniforms in Apopka the first time you buy uniforms. Students can try clothes on to see what they like and what sizes they need.
- 🐾 After that, you can typically order online from Dennis or Land's End School Uniforms. Go to the school's website for links to these vendors. Here are some things to know:
 - The Land's End uniforms at Sears are not part of the TCS program; but items you buy via the Land's End catalog or website can be returned to Sears.
- 🐾 Here's a guide to what you'll need to get started:
 - One complete dress uniform for your child's grade level. This will be worn only a few times a year.
 - One week's worth of regular uniforms (polos, jumpers, skorts/shorts/pants).
 - Gym shorts and T-shirts for middle school students (available only at Dennis Uniforms).
 - As cool weather approaches, you'll want a TCS sweatshirt and/or jacket.
 - You will buy shoes and socks separately, not through a uniform vendor. You can refer to the uniform policy for information about appropriate footwear.
 - Girls are permitted to wear tights under their skirts in cold weather if they wish to, and students may wear long-sleeved T-shirts under their uniforms for warmth as needed. These items may be purchased separately.
- 🐾 Every Friday is an optional T-shirt day, and students are permitted to wear any TCS T-shirt – one from Dennis or from a previous school event.
- 🐾 Both Dennis and Land's End offer periodic pricing specials, so watch for those.
- 🐾 Also watch for The Christ School-sponsored used uniform sales held a few times a year, including in the summer before school starts. This is a popular way to get uniforms at a good price.

“Cashual” Days

- 🐾 Periodically the school has casual dress days, when students may wear their non-uniform clothes. Clothes must meet casual dress guidelines.
- 🐾 Students bring in \$1 to be casual (hence the “cash” in “cashual”), which goes toward a specific school fundraising project.
- 🐾 For more information, see the uniform policy on the school website.

Extended Care Registration

- 🐾 If you plan to make use of the TCS Extended Care program, you will need to register before the school year starts. Look for registration information in the summer packet that is mailed to homes.
- 🐾 The program includes before-school care from 7:30-8:05 a.m. and after-school care until 5:30 p.m.
- 🐾 You may register for just the days and time frames (morning or afternoon) you need.
- 🐾 Children are grouped according to grade level, with kindergarten through fourth grade in one group, and fifth through eighth in another.
- 🐾 TCS teachers and staff run the program by planning activities, overseeing homework, providing snacks, encouraging free play, organizing structured activities, ensuring student safety and more.
- 🐾 Students typically have a lot of fun in Extended Day and make new friends from other grades and classes.
- 🐾 For more information, see the school’s website or talk with a staff member.

Helping Paws Tip:

***For the ties on the girls’ uniforms, the school recommends a square knot:
Right over left, then left over right.***

***But don’t worry – there’s really no right or wrong way to tie the tie,
so don’t let that throw you on the first day of school!***

First Day of School

- 🐾 All children should wear their dress uniform the first day of school.
- 🐾 Have your child at school between 8:05 and 8:25 a.m., whether they are in elementary or middle school.
- 🐾 Your child should come to school on the first day with:
 - A backpack
 - Lunch (unless you signed up for the prepaid lunch program)
 - A healthy snack and bottle of water
 - School supplies (if you didn't pre-purchase them through PTF)
 - A rest mat for kindergartners
 - Write your child's name on all these items, including school uniform pieces
- 🐾 You are welcome to walk your children to their classrooms on the first day of school.
- 🐾 Kindergarten parents are encouraged to attend Kleenex and Coffee after drop-off on the first day.
 - Sponsored by the TCS Parent Teacher Fellowship, Kleenex and Coffee is a valuable time of fellowship for kindergarten parents.
 - You can enjoy refreshments, hear from school and PTF leaders, see a short interview with your child's teacher and more.
 - And if you find that you need a Kleenex, there are plenty available!
 - Please join fellow TCS families in the King Parlor at 8:30 a.m.
- 🐾 Pick up your elementary school student between 2:45 and 3:05 p.m.
- 🐾 Pick up your middle school student between 3:10 and 3:30 p.m.
- 🐾 If your child is in Extended Day, plan to pick him or her up by 5:30 p.m. (Snacks are provided.)
- 🐾 Listen in wonder as they tell you all the new things they heard, saw, did, learned and loved at their new school!

Helping Paws Tip:

If your child is starting kindergarten, you won't want to miss Kleenex and Coffee in King Parlor after drop-off on the first day.

Part of the Pride ... A Day in the Life of a Lion

You'll quickly figure out the daily routine. Here are some tips to get you started.

Morning Care

- 🐾 If your child is in morning Extended Care, you will receive a security badge to gain access to the building prior to school opening.
- 🐾 You will walk your child to the Extended Care classroom on the first floor of Allen Hall, across from the kindergarten classes.
- 🐾 A staff member will make sure your child gets to class before school starts.

Morning Drop-Off

- 🐾 It's your choice whether to use carpool or to walk up. See the website for carpool details and a diagram.
- 🐾 Carpool procedure – Morning drop-off
 - Pull into carpool line and follow the cars or Security/staff's directions.
 - For safety, don't use cell phones, hand-held devices, etc. while you're in the carpool line.
 - Wait for a helper to open your child's door once you're under the Angel Wing.
 - Stay in the car, and the helper will get your child out safely.
 - When your child is out and all doors are closed, prepare to pull up when the line moves ahead.
- 🐾 Walk-up procedure – Morning drop-off
 - Park on a nearby street (pay the meter!) or in the parking garage at Rosalind Avenue and Jackson Street. The person at the reception desk will validate ticket stubs, or you can buy an annual parking pass. (See page 14).
 - Walk into the main school building, Allen Hall, with your child.
 - From the lobby, staff and patrols help guide students to their classrooms.
 - Stay safe near the busy carpool line when entering and leaving the school.
 - For safety, dropping off in non-designated areas isn't permitted.

Helping Paws Tip:

***For the safety of students and other drivers,
don't stop in the road to let children out of the car.***

A Day in the Life of a Lion, continued

Chapel

- 🐾 Elementary school students start every day with chapel in the sanctuary from 8:30-8:45 a.m.
- 🐾 Middle school students have chapel twice a week, on Wednesdays in the Reformation Chapel, and on Fridays in the sanctuary with the elementary school students.
- 🐾 This is a time for students to prepare spiritually for the day through song, scriptures, lessons, announcements and prayer.
- 🐾 Parents, family and friends are welcome and encouraged to attend chapel as often as they like. It's an uplifting way to start any day!
- 🐾 Students sit with their classes. Guests may sit anywhere behind the last row of students or in the balcony.
- 🐾 Throughout the year, each class hosts chapel two or three times.
 - From the host class, students are selected to say the opening prayer, lead the Pledges and say the closing prayer. Teachers send classroom parents a list of speakers in advance of their chapel week.
 - On Fridays, the host class typically performs songs or skits or shares a message in a creative and meaningful way. You won't want to miss these chances to see your child shine and share the messages of our Heavenly Father!

Lunch

- 🐾 Kindergarten students eat lunch in their classroom with their teachers. Older students eat in the Warehouse on the third floor, and parents can help.
- 🐾 Students can either bring lunch from home or pre-purchase lunch through the school program. Lunches from home should include a healthy drink.
- 🐾 The school offers a lunch program for students in all grades, including kindergarten. For details, see the school's website. In short:
 - Food is provided by local vendors, with a different menu every day of the week. Drinks are included.
 - Parents pre-pay for lunches for select days, one month at a time.
 - The lunches are delivered and waiting for students in the lunchroom (or brought to kindergarten classrooms.)

Helping Paws Tip:

***Volunteer occasionally to help with lunch in your child's class.
It's fun to see your child enjoying their friends on their own turf.***

Afternoon Pickup

- 🐾 Carpool procedure – Afternoon pickup
 - Put a sign in your front dash with your child’s last name in bold letters.
 - For safety, don’t use cell phones, hand-held devices, etc. while you’re in the carpool line.
 - Be patient – afternoon carpool can take a while.
 - Helpers will walk your child to your car and help him or her get in safely.
- 🐾 Walk-up procedure – Afternoon pickup
 - Park on the street (and pay the meter) or in the parking garage.
 - At the front desk, tell the staff member your child’s name and teacher, and the staff member will call for your child to meet you in the lobby.
 - To avoid two-way foot traffic near the carpool line, you and your child will exit the building through the doors at the end of the south hallway.

Extended Care

- 🐾 For Extended Care pickup, parents can pull up under the Angel Wing and park short-term, as long as carpool is done and there are no special events in that area.
- 🐾 Children must be picked up by 5:30.
- 🐾 If there’s an emergency and you’re going to be late, call to let the Extended Care staff know. You’ll need to get the after-hours Extended Care phone number from a staff member at the start of the year.

Extracurricular Activities

- 🐾 TCS offers a variety of extra-curricular activities for children of all ages.
- 🐾 In the fall, watch for communication about a variety of offerings for younger students, including dance, drama and more (called Arts After School).
- 🐾 For older students, there is a variety of sports, clubs and activities.
- 🐾 There is a fee associated with most extracurricular activities, which underwrites the cost of the program.
- 🐾 Many programs also require specific apparel, equipment, instruments, accessories, etc.
- 🐾 Watch for communication about the offerings through fliers in backpacks, Edline, Dr. Powell’s weekly e-mail messages and the school website.

Mane Ways to Get Involved

Staying Connected

Communicating with Teachers

- Most teachers have a great system for daily communication between home and school, and they will tell you at the start of the year how it works.
- Parents should check students' folders and backpacks daily for important information, homework, messages from the teacher/school, etc.
- E-mail is a great way to communicate day-to-day information to teachers. Most teachers check their e-mail before and after school every day and respond quickly to questions and needs.
- Teachers have phones in their classrooms for emergencies but do not take calls during the day. They check voice mail periodically, though, so you can leave a message in a pinch.
- All teachers are available to schedule parent-teacher conferences upon request.

Getting News from the School

- The school's website is an excellent source of general school information.
- For information specific to your child and his or her classroom(s), TCS uses Edline (edline.com). You will want to create an account and check Edline at least once a week for information including current classroom studies and activities, student grades, homework assignments, notes from the teacher, special events and more.
- Dr. Powell sends a "TCS Weekly Update" e-mail to families who are signed up to receive them. They are an important source of information about school events and activities and more. Sign up on the website.
- Occasionally the school mails correspondence. These typically have important information and sometimes require action (re-enrollment, event RSVP, etc.)
- Room parents are also a great source of regular communication, sending information about classroom events, managing field trip chaperone sign-ups, gathering parent feedback as needed, etc.

Helping Paws Tip:

Your child's backpack is a treasure trove of information, containing special projects, homework assignments, notes to home and more. Check it daily, and dig to the bottom!

Getting Involved

- 🐾 Teachers offer many opportunities for parents to be involved as chaperones, event coordinators, classroom guests and more. Sometimes a specific number of parents is needed for an activity, and sometimes all are welcome.
- 🐾 For field trips, chaperones and drivers are needed, and there usually isn't a limit on how many parents can attend. To become an approved driver, you'll have to present a driver's license and proof of insurance to the school once a year.
- 🐾 At Meet the Teacher and/or Open House, room parents will have sign-up sheets for events throughout the year. Bring your calendar, and be ready to sign up!
- 🐾 The PTF has committees and activities school-wide. Parents are invited and encouraged to get involved. That can mean anything from working at an event to organizing one. Feel free to contact the PTF president and express your interest.
- 🐾 One Great Day of Service offers TCS students the opportunity to perform a service to those in our local community who are in need. The school's mission comes to life through this PTF-sponsored event. Parents are invited to participate in this uplifting experience with their children.
- 🐾 If you want to get involved and don't know how you can best use your gifts, talk to your child's teacher, the room parent or a member of PTF.

Development and Fund Raisers

- 🐾 The school has several successful programs to raise funds that enhance the school's programs and prepare for the future. All families are encouraged to support these events as they can with their time, attendance and financial gifts.
- 🐾 Mane Event – This major fundraiser includes a golf tournament and an annual dinner/auction affair.
 - The two parts of the Mane Event take place at different times during the year – the golf tournament in the fall and the dinner in the spring.
 - Information about these events comes out well in advance, and all are encouraged to take part in – and even help organize – the events.
- 🐾 Annual Fund – This is an annual appeal to supplement the operating needs of TCS, including academic resources and extracurricular activities. As family members at an independent school, we are all encouraged to support TCS through a gift to the annual fund.
- 🐾 Because of these school-wide development activities, students aren't asked to participate in individual sales/fund raisers (wrapping paper, cookies, etc.).
- 🐾 For more information about these and other school events, go to the TCS website and click on Development. You can also look for information on these opportunities throughout the year.

Lion's Share of Questions

Maybe we've answered the lion's share of questions, or maybe your family still has plenty more. Please reach out to the school or to your Helping Paws to let them know what you still need to know. Here are a few final questions and answers to get you started.

Q: What do I do if I need to take my child out of school during the day for a doctor's appointment, etc?

A: Let your child's teacher know in advance when possible. When you arrive at the school, ask the staff member at the first floor lobby desk to call your child to meet you. Sign your child out (and back in if you return) on the sheet at the desk.

Q: What happens if my child becomes ill during the day at school?

A: A child who becomes ill or sustains an injury during the school day will be sent to the clinic for an evaluation. If the child needs to be picked up, the clinic staff will call the parents at the contact numbers listed in the school paperwork. Parents should pick up their child promptly to ensure the child's comfort, and also to protect other students in the event of illness.

Q: What do I do if my child needs to take medication during the school day?

A: For prescription medications that must be taken during school hours (including during school-sponsored field trips, sporting events, etc), parents should bring the medicine to the school clinic (second floor of Allen Hall, in the office). Medication must be in its original, labeled container. Parents will need to fill out an authorization form so the school can dispense the medication. Non-prescription medication (pain relievers, etc.) will not be administered through the school without a doctor's written permission.

Q: Are siblings/younger children welcome at school events or on field trips?

A: At many events, siblings and other children are more than welcome. That includes chapel, many daytime school programs (dance performances, etc.) and most evening school-wide events (Talent Show, Arts in April, etc.). You will want to leave siblings at home while you attend Meet the Teacher, parent-teacher conferences and field trips (prohibited by school policy).

Helping Paws Tip:

If you have a question, plenty of others probably have the same one. Feel free to ask!

Q: Where should I park when I come to school?

A: There are several options:

- Parking garage at Rosalind and Jackson – Use the 5th or 6th floor. The garage is for both short- and long-term parking (up to a full day). The school can validate your parking stub at the lobby desk.
 - Note: Parking passes are available for \$10 through the First Presbyterian Church of Orlando and are valid indefinitely.
 - Parents can buy the passes through the church. See the staff member at the reception desk in the Edington Ministry Center.
- Street parking near the school – This is for shorter-term parking. Pay the meter, or you will likely get a ticket. The area is very well patrolled.

Q: How can I get in touch with other parents?

A: See the green three-ring binder the school will give you. There's a complete listing of all TCS families, including addresses and phone numbers. This is a great resource for establishing carpools.

Q: Who do I contact if I want to suggest additions to future Helping Paws handbooks?

A: Contact Admission Coordinator Sharon Darin at 407-849-1665 or e-mail her at sdarin@thechristschool.org.

Helping Paws Tip:

Make notes along the way about things you wish you had known when you started at TCS, and we'll add information to this handbook for next year.



The Christ School

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Our Mission Statement:

The Christ School exists to provide a loving, Christ-centered environment in which children will grow intellectually, spiritually, physically and socially. Christian educators will provide nurturing guidance so that the children will learn to love themselves and others as Christ loved the Church and will demonstrate that love in service to others.