



OJAI  
VALLEY  
SCHOOL



Parent-to-Parent  
Handbook

*Lower Campus*

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## INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Welcome to Ojai Valley School. OVS prides itself on being not just a school but also a home and a community. As parents, you too, are part of the OVS family. We hope this handbook will answer many of your questions and that the information we've provided will help you and your child better prepare for the year ahead. We recommend you keep this information handy and refer to it regularly as the school year progresses.

## THE BASICS

### Our Mascot

Our mascot is the Spud (Yes! The potato). We refer to OVS students as "Spuds."

### Campuses

Ojai Valley School has two campuses. The Lower Campus, located at 723 El Paseo Road, is where our Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade classes are held. The Lower Campus is divided into three divisions: Primary (Pre-K and Kindergarten), Elementary (first grade through fifth grade), and Middle School (sixth grade through eighth grade). The Upper Campus is where our high school, grades nine through twelve, are located. It is in the east end of Ojai at 10820 Reeves Road. You will often hear the campuses referred to as "Lower" and "Upper."

### Students

OVS has both day students and resident (boarding) students. Day students come from Ojai, as well as from the surrounding cities in west Ventura County. A bus runs daily with pick-ups and drop-offs in Ventura and Oxnard.

At Lower Campus, students may board as early as the third grade. As the grades increase, so do the number of boarding students, with the vast majority of resident students in middle school. Most resident students are seven-day boarders, but the school also has a five-day residential program for students who live close enough to school to go home on the weekends. The Upper Campus has its own dorms for resident students.

Resident students are permitted to visit or spend the night at the home of a day student on the weekends. Requests must be made in advance at the Front Office, and the resident student must receive written permission from their parents (email is acceptable) no later than Thursday before the weekend.

### English as a Second Language Program (ESL)

OVS is home to students from all over the world who come here to immerse themselves in American culture and to learn English. Students in the ESL program come from many countries, including, in recent years, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, China, Mexico, and Russia. ESL students have their own separate classes and teachers and are "mainstreamed" into regular classes based upon their mastery of the English language. ESL students are integrated into sports, co-curricular and extracurricular activities.

## The Administration

Lars Kuelling - Head of School

Laurie Clark - Head of Lower Campus

Michele Floyd - Assistant Head of Lower Campus/Curriculum Coordinator

Craig Floyd - Head of Upper Campus

## Re-Enrollment and Financial Aid

Once admitted to Ojai Valley School, students need not re-apply for any grade (including from eighth to ninth grade). Students are offered re-enrollment in February based on their academic performance, behavior, and positive contributions to the school community. We expect students to become active participants in the life of the school and take advantage of the educational experiences provided inside and outside the classroom. Re-enrollment can be withheld if a student has not demonstrated the skills, effort, integrity, or responsible behavior we expect of all OVS students.

Ojai Valley School is committed to supporting its student community by providing financial assistance to families that cannot afford full tuition. Financial aid is awarded after careful consideration by the Financial Aid Committee. Awards are granted annually and *requests must be renewed each year in February*. Financial aid is limited with the majority reserved for returning students. In addition to financial aid, Ojai Valley School offers a limited number of merit and need-based scholarships. These grants are supported by endowments or gifts to the OVS Annual Fund. They are awarded at the discretion of the Financial Aid Committee.

## MAKING THE CONNECTION

### What's Going On?

When arriving at OVS, parents and students immediately notice the abundance of activities, and it starts the first day of school. How do you learn about the activities and events, and how do you learn what is expected of both you and your child at these events or activities? Hopefully, this booklet will answer many of your questions. If not, there is a built-in network to help provide support. There are a variety of ways to find out what is going on at OVS:

- Check the website: [www.ovs.org](http://www.ovs.org)
- Read the weekly "Notes from Ojai Valley School" e-newsletter sent on Fridays. Ensure the school has your correct email address so that you can receive the Notes.
- Attend All-school meetings on Tuesday and Thursday mornings
- Join a Parent Club meeting on selected Fridays.
- Read Parent Club updates that are posted on the website and check the OVS Parent Club Facebook page [www.facebook.com/OVSParentClub](http://www.facebook.com/OVSParentClub).
- Be sure to read all correspondence from the school, as much of it contains valuable information about upcoming events.
- Call your room parent or the Front Office.

### Resource Page

Please visit our "Resource" page on the OVS website [www.ovs.org/parents/resources](http://www.ovs.org/parents/resources). You will find links to our handbooks, calendars, summer reading assignments, supply lists, Outdoor Education camping lists, and more on this page.

### **All-School Meetings**

On Tuesday and Thursday mornings, all students and faculty attend an “all-school” meeting in the Greenberg Activities Center. At All-School, lessons of character and community are emphasized. Announcements are made, upcoming events are reviewed, students give reports on activities (i.e., camping trips, sporting events), and present what they are learning about character in their school day. Representatives of the Student Council and the Parent Club make speeches and announcements. All-School typically lasts 20-30 minutes. *Attending all-school is an excellent way to discover what is happening at OVS and a prime opportunity to see what makes OVS such a unique, individualized, and supportive educational environment.* Students are required to arrive at school before All-School begins.

### **Parent Club Meetings**

The Parent Club meets once a month on a Friday morning. At each Parent Club meeting, the calendar for the next month is reviewed. The Parent Club is discussed in more detail below.

### **OVS.ORG**

Go to the OVS website [www.ovs.org](http://www.ovs.org) to review the calendar. The Resources page (under the Parents tab) includes supply lists, calendars, summer reading lists, and other resources to help plan for the upcoming academic year.

### **Correspondence**

Be sure to read all the correspondence from the school. OVS does not inundate you with unnecessary correspondence; each email contains important information. Mark your calendars. Emails may be directed to the Head of Lower Campus with questions and comments. You may also call the Front Office at (805) 646-1423 or email at [ovs@ovs.org](mailto:ovs@ovs.org). Our staff is happy to help you in any way.

Notes from Ojai Valley School is a weekly e-newsletter sent to all OVS families. It covers recent events and touches on important OVS community stories. If you are not receiving this weekly communique, please ensure the Front Office has your current email address.

The OVS Parent Club runs a Facebook page [www.facebook.com/OVSParentClub](http://www.facebook.com/OVSParentClub). You can find regular event reminders and important school announcements on this page.

Primary and elementary grade teachers will send communication home through weekly class email. The Middle School teachers and advisors will communicate through email. Middle schoolers use Google Classroom, and teachers will help students learn to use it at the beginning of the year and parents at Back-to-School Night.

### **Getting Involved**

One of the first things many parents and guardians ask is how they can get involved. The obvious answers are to support your children, develop open communication with teachers, and attend OVS functions and events. Other ways are not necessarily obvious: participating in the Parent Club ([www.ovs.org](http://www.ovs.org)), becoming a room parent, and helping with fundraising events.

While we recognize that parents of day students can more easily get involved than parents of resident students, there are plenty of opportunities for all parents. Parents of day and resident students can support OVS through contributions to the Annual Fund. In addition, attendance at the Fall Family Weekend in October is encouraged. During Family Weekend, you can arrive early and attend the Parent Club meeting on Friday, volunteer to work the book fair (proceeds benefit the library) or contribute your time and talent to the many activities provided for children. You can also attend the Elementary Play in the Fall. Other fun events for our whole community are Campus Lighting in December and the Middle School play during our spring Family Weekend.

### **Parent Club Purpose Statement**

The mission of the Parent Club is to support the mission and philosophy of the school by creating a positive atmosphere that furthers a sense of community, spirit, and cultural enrichment.

The Parent Club provides essential faculty and staff support. The Parent Club is not fundraising-focused but works with the school's primary fundraising campaigns. Revenue from occasional lesser fundraisers will be used to benefit the greatest number of students. All OVS parents and guardians are automatically members of the Parent Club. Volunteer participation is strongly encouraged. Every effort will be made to accommodate the time and talent of individual families. The Head of Campus' office guides the Parent Club and its committees and supports their special events.

### **Parent Club Meetings**

Parent Club meetings will be held monthly and as needed throughout the year. Please refer to the OVS calendar for dates and times. All OVS parents and guardians are strongly encouraged to attend and participate in these meetings. Attendance at these meetings provides parents valuable information about school happenings and issues. It helps create a community that comes together socially and professionally, driven by a common goal to make our school a better place for all our families.

Parent Club meetings are generally held on the first Friday of each month.

### **Parent Club Volunteer Opportunities & Committees**

The following listing describes the Parent Club volunteer needs for this school year. Please review this list carefully and decide where you find the best fit for your time and talent. Independent schools count on the volunteerism of the entire school community.

- **ROOM PARENTS** perform several essential functions at the Lower Campus in support of students in grades PK-8. They represent their children's classes at Parent Club general meetings to ensure representation, provide assistance with class-related projects, and help to provide a communication link between parents and the Parent Club. They work at the teacher's request, with the Head's approval, along with other parents, assisting with holiday parties, field trips, in-school projects, and various events. Room parents also help welcome new families to the community throughout the year.
- **FAMILY FUN COMMITTEE** supports the school in spearheading fun family events, such as the new student welcome pool party, outdoor movies on the Hermes Quad, and other family events throughout the year.

- SPUD CLASSIC GOLF TOURNAMENT COMMITTEE volunteers help to organize the fall Spud Classic Golf Tournament. This annual event is held in December at Soule Park Golf Course in Ojai. Current parents, past parents, alumni, faculty, and staff are encouraged to participate on or off the greens.
- SUNSHINE COMMITTEE volunteers ensure recognition of community members who are going through a difficult time, such as an unforeseen illness or passing of a loved one; or for those celebrating a birth, marriage, or other causes for support and cheer.
- TEACHER APPRECIATION VOLUNTEERS organize parent groups to find appropriate expressions of gratitude to the faculty and staff during Teacher Appreciation Week and in smaller ways throughout the year.
- UPPER CAMPUS LIAISON communicates what is happening at the Upper Campus, grades 9-12, and helps to build a bridge between the two campuses, creating opportunities for special projects and events that unify the school from grades PK-12.
- FAMILY MENTORS supports incoming new families by extending a phone call, initiating invitations to school events, answering questions, and generally helping acclimate to the new community.

### **“Fun”-raising**

The Parent Club’s primary focus is to bring the community together and offer fun activities while supporting the mission of OVS. The Parent Club will engage in a few fundraising endeavors during the year.

Any funds raised by the Parent Club are used to purchase items for the school that benefit the greatest number of students. The Parent Club’s priority is to offer special guest speakers, enrichment programs/workshops, and performing arts events for all students. The Parent Club also sponsors Teacher Appreciation Week.

### **Annual Fund**

Gifts to the OVS Annual Fund help bridge the significant gap between tuition and expenses by providing much-needed general operating support. Annual Fund gifts help pay for educational programs and projects, activities such as camping and sports, and the facilities your child uses daily on campus. Contributions to the Annual Fund are significant to OVS as they provide flexibility in their use and allow the administration to use the funds for the areas of greatest need. Our goal is 100% Annual Fund participation, meaning that each OVS family contributes. The Annual Fund is conducted by a parent chair with the help of volunteers under the guidance and direction of the Head of School and Director of Development.

*More importantly, all gifts are significant and appreciated, no matter how great or small. It is your participation that counts.*

### **Parent Fundraising Volunteers**

The volunteers work in collaboration with the Development and Alumni Relations office to increase the revenue and participation in the OVS Annual Fund. The volunteers contact the parents/guardians of the students to encourage them to make an Annual Fund gift. Contact is made by letter, email, telephone, and in person. Please consider making your donation early in the school year, as this saves OVS time and money and also ensures you fewer phone calls!

### **Annual Fund Giving Levels**

Founder's Circle: \$10,000 and above

Trustees' Circle: \$5,000 to \$9,999

Leadership Circle: \$1,000 to \$4,999

Head of School's Club: \$500 to \$999

OVS Sponsors: \$250 to \$499

Friends of OVS: \$250 and below

### **Capital Campaigns**

OVS periodically embarks on special campaigns for capital improvements. In the simplest terms, capital campaign funds are used to construct new buildings and renovate/upgrade existing facilities. During a capital campaign, OVS asks for donations in addition to the Annual Fund, to raise the necessary funds quickly for a specific purpose. When the funds are raised, the campaign is over.

Over the past years, the Lower Campus has fulfilled its dreams of a new equestrian facility, technology center, pool complex, pergola, playground, the Greenberg Activities Center, the Alan F. Pearson Center for the Arts, and the new West entrance.

*It is important to note that every facility your child uses at OVS has been made possible by the generosity of families that have come before you.*

### **How to Give**

Donations may be made by cash, check, major credit card, and securely online at [www.ovs.org/give](http://www.ovs.org/give). Many employers match employees' charitable contributions, which could double or triple the impact of your gift. Please check with your company's human resource department.

Appreciated securities may be donated to OVS at their current value. This gift may afford you a significant tax advantage as you might obtain a tax deduction for the total market value of the gift, and you may avoid a tax on the capital gains.

The Yeomans Legacy was founded to honor donors who support OVS through their estate plans. Estate planning may also provide significant benefits to you and your family. Some possible benefits are increased income, reduced income taxes, and reduced or eliminated capital gains or estate taxes. OVS is also pleased to accept "gifts in kind." Items or services that benefit the school can be donated throughout the year and help stretch the budget for daily operating expenses.

Questions about giving? Please contact the Development and Alumni Relations office at (805) 646-1423 or [development@ovs.org](mailto:development@ovs.org).



## HIGHLIGHTED EVENTS

*Please refer to the official Lower Campus calendar posted on the website ([www.ovs.org](http://www.ovs.org)) for all events. Activities and dates are subject to change throughout the school year.*

### **Orientation**

Orientation is the day before school starts, when the resident students arrive, and when new families of day students are formally introduced to OVS. During orientation, the administration welcomes new parents, and the school department chairs and parent committees will make remarks. Our Admission team will verify that all online forms and annual health exams are completed. Students may not begin school on the first day without all forms completed.

### **Back-to-School Night**

Back-to-School Night (for parents of children in grades PK-8) is usually held in early September. Parents meet in the Greenberg Activities Center, where they are welcomed by the Head and introduced to the Parent Club, Annual Fund Parent Rep, administration, and faculty. From there, parents will go to the classrooms to meet the teachers and learn about what is in store for the school year.

### **School Pictures**

There are three picture days per school year. The first one is held in September, and the dress is everyday school attire. Each student's picture is taken for the student/faculty directory and student ID cards. Group class pictures are also taken at that time. Photo packages are delivered to the students approximately six weeks later. The second picture day is a make-up day for students who missed the first September date (see calendar for details).

The third picture day is in the spring. On that day, an all-school panoramic photo is taken. Children are asked to come to school dressed in formal attire and to bring clothes to change into after pictures. The panoramic photo is taken in the morning. Pictures will be delivered near the end of the school year. All-school photos from the past are on display in the Front Office hallway and the library.

### **Camping Trips**

The OVS Outdoor Education program includes myriad opportunities for students to experience the outdoors, for all ages. In the fall and spring, grades 2-8 go camping with their classes. There are also many other outdoor activities, such as Class Hikes (grades Pre-Kindergarten to 8) and middle school weekend adventures. See the Outdoor Education section for more information.

### **Family Weekends**

There are two Family Weekends per school year, one on the last weekend of October and one on the last weekend of March. Both events occur at mid-semester. Family Weekend is filled with many activities. During the October Family Weekend, the school hosts a parent social for middle and high school parents at the Upper Campus. Highlights at the spring Family Weekend, held at the Lower Campus, include performances and presentations. During both events, the Parent Club hosts a variety

of activities. A book fair is often held at the Lower Campus, and the school store will be open. Don't forget to pick up an OVS T-shirt and hat for yourself!

The Fall Family Weekend is the first time many resident students have seen their parents since the start of school. Consequently, the Monday after the fall Family Weekend is a teacher In-Service day, and there are no classes on either campus. In the spring, the Monday In-Service day is just for the Lower Campus.

### **Turkey Trot**

The Student Council organizes an annual jogging event called the Turkey Trot. All students participate in some manner. Proceeds are donated to a different cause depending on the community needs.

### **Campus Lighting**

Campus Lighting is a much-loved annual OVS event. This is a winter holiday performance in which all students participate. The event will most likely take place outdoors with hot cocoa. The children dress in costume. (Information is given at the time regarding the students' costumes.) Parents, friends, and families are all invited. Room Parents ask that parents bring a plate of baked goods to share during the social event that follows the performance. Don't forget your cameras.

### **High Tea**

The High Tea takes place in April for Pre-Kindergarten through second grade students and is a not-to-be-missed event. The children dress in their finery, practice good manners, perform musical acts, and enjoy delectable treats graciously served by the second-graders. All family and friends are encouraged to attend. Invitations are sent, and RSVPs are requested.

Eighth-grade students who attended the High Tea as younger students are invited, along with their families, as guests of honor. Don't forget your camera!

Parents assist with the preparations by making flower arrangements, helping in the kitchen, and setting the tables. If you are interested in helping out, contact the school for more information.

### **Promotions and Graduations**

The last week of school at OVS is an exciting time. On Monday, the Leadership Lunch takes place. The week includes activities such as pool parties, socials, and field trips for grades PK-5. Sixth and seventh-graders host the annual eighth-grade breakfast and entertainment, followed by a pool party and yearbook signing. In place of a graduation party, the eighth-graders go on their final class trip. During this time, the elementary and primary grades have promotions and ceremonies. There are no classes after Tuesday, as Wednesday and Thursday are reserved for ceremonies. Students can start to enjoy their summers after their promotions.

Graduation and promotion ceremonies at OVS are, simply stated, lovely. All ceremonies take place on the Hermes Quad. Each student is personally recognized by their teacher and "promoted" to the next grade. The students also perform musical numbers.

There are five separate events, starting with the eighth-grade awards ceremony on the Friday before graduation. On Wednesday of the last week, the Kindergarten graduation and promotion of Pre-K occurs first thing in the morning. The second ceremony that day graduates the fifth-graders into middle school, and promotes the students in grades 1-4.

On Thursday morning, grades 6 and 7 are promoted. Thursday morning, the eighth-graders graduate and outstanding students are recognized with major awards. The Upper Campus graduation is held on Friday morning for graduating seniors.

## THE CURRICULUM

OVS is truly a unique school that provides an extensive program for its students. In addition to the strong academic program, OVS provides a full enrichment program.

### The Academics

Instruction is child-centered and differentiated to meet the varying levels of ability and interest and to reach each child with a meaningful approach to learning. OVS values integrating problem-solving and critical thinking practices to develop high levels of creativity and understanding in a hands-on approach.

In addition to the core classes of math, science, language arts, Spanish, and social studies, each student has art, music, technology, performing arts, and woodshop. OVS has a full physical education department that includes everything from swimming to school sports teams. Students in Pre-K and K have equestrian activities, while students in first through third grades also have horseback riding. From fourth through eighth grade, students may continue equestrian riding in place of PE for an additional fee.

Starting in the third grade, students begin receiving letter grades. Prior to that, students are ranked as grade level, above grade level, or below grade level. In all grades, in all classes, students are also graded on their effort, with 5 being outstanding and 1 being poor.

### Grading System

Grading and academic reporting at OVS include the following:

*Pre-K through second grade:*

- 5 point effort scale
- Grade level / Above grade level / Below grade level
- Two semester system with comments
- Two midterm reports

*Third grade and up:*

- 5 point effort scale
- Letter grade scale of A to F, or Pass
- Two semester system with grades and comments
- Two midterm reports with grades

*Additionally, some grades and/or students may also receive:*

- Student progress reports submitted by teachers
- Academic contracts
- Progress reports (for students who need greater monitoring)

Recommendations provided, upon request, for high school applications. Transcripts are provided, as necessary.

### **Homework**

Homework is meant to help develop time-management skills and responsibility.

It serves as a reinforcement of concepts already taught, or an extension of a lesson. The guidelines for each grade/division are as follows:

Elementary: Independent reading for 10 minutes per grade level (first grade, 10 min., second grade, 20 min, etc.), in addition to teacher-assigned homework of 10 to 15 min. per grade level.

Middle School: No more than 20 minutes of homework per class period. Many teachers will assign ongoing projects.

### **Learning Center**

OVS provides additional support to students through the Learning Center. The Learning Center is a resource and class for students with learning differences/challenges and other diagnosed conditions. There is an additional fee for the Learning Center services.

### **Tutoring/After School Academic Help**

Typically, each teacher is available 30 minutes after the school day ends, Tuesday through Thursday, to assist students with their school work. Teachers may not be available on most Monday afternoons when faculty meetings are scheduled, and some middle school teachers may be unavailable when coaching sports teams after school. Please talk to your child's teacher if you feel they need additional help. To foster the home/school connection and so that parents see the daily progress of K-2 students, office hours are generally not a place for your child to regularly complete homework.

### **Enrichment**

OVS has an extensive Outdoor Education program, broad music and performing arts program, and an outstanding equestrian program. In addition, each class participates in a community service project focused on action and participation rather than fundraising. The younger grades participate in the High Tea, learning good manners and tradition. Beginning in Pre-K, students are introduced to public speaking and performing at All-School meetings. Furthermore, each student participates in numerous performing arts presentations throughout the year. Certain grades have specific leadership programs. The Middle School participates in clubs and leadership committees.

### **Physical Education**

At OVS, physical education is vital to educating the whole child. Our classes are fun and accessible to all students, and build confidence as well as skills. In addition to fitness, coordination, and athletics, students learn about the importance of nutrition and wellness to maintain a healthy body. The school has tennis courts, basketball courts, a large athletic field, and a swimming pool. For its size, OVS has quite a varied PE

department. As part of their regular PE class, students participate in basic sports and other movement activities such as water polo, dance, jump rope, and yoga.

### **Sports Teams**

Students in grades 6, 7, and 8 are invited to try out for various sports teams. Practices are primarily during school hours but may extend after the day bus has departed. Parents will receive a game schedule and regular updates regarding travel for away games. The sports we currently offer with competitions against other schools are volleyball, soccer, and basketball.

### **PE Athleticwear**

All students must wear well-fitted athletic shoes in physical education. Students choosing to wear fashion shoes or boots to school need to keep athletic shoes at school or bring them each day that they have PE class. Students in grades 5-8 are expected to wear OVS PE T-shirts for PE class, which can be purchased from the student store. If a child fails to dress or wear appropriate shoes for PE, this will result in a lower effort grade.

### **Swimming**

OVS is fortunate to have a large, beautiful swimming pool. During the warm months, students will swim and have swim lessons for PE.

### **Music Programs**

OVS has a top-notch music and Performing Arts department. Every child takes music class and participates in at least one yearly performance. The elementary play is presented on the first Family Weekend in October, the Campus Lighting program is in December, and the Middle School play runs during Family Weekend in March. Parent help on costumes and sets is always appreciated. If interested, please contact the Performing Arts Coordinator.

During the year, OVS hosts various performances. Students will also attend off-campus performances, such as the Ojai Storytelling Festival and selected New West Symphony concerts. Students in third and fourth grade have recorder classes (it's recommended you purchase a recorder for practicing at home). Fifth grade will be involved with the "Got Strings" violin program.

After-school music lessons are offered to all students on most instruments (voice included). Top professionals from the community teach lessons on campus. There is an additional fee for after-school music lessons. To sign up, fill out the form on the website or contact the Performing Arts Coordinator. Lessons are scheduled by the individual music teacher (phone numbers for teachers are available, and parents are encouraged to make contact). The school does have a few rental instruments, but it is best if students arrive with their own instruments. There are several music stores in Ventura where instruments can be rented. Students taking music lessons are encouraged to participate in at least one recital during the year.

Each middle school student is to attend at least one off-campus performance with the school, such as a symphony concert. Middle school students sign up at the beginning of

the year, and reminders are sent out as the event nears.

There are also middle and elementary school chorus, which meet during school hours and hold performances throughout the school year.

### **Outdoor Education**

Outdoor Education is a significant part of the OVS experience. All students participate in the program depending on their age and grade level. The program is structured to provide appropriate and enjoyable experiences such as base camping, class hikes, and (specifically for middle school students) backpacking. Various weekend trips such as surfing, rock climbing, kayaking, mountaineering, river rafting, and mountain biking also occur throughout the year, for middle schoolers.

Camping begins in the first grade. For each grade, there are two trips per year; one in the fall and one in the spring (first grade camps in the spring only). The duration, challenge, and educational goals are matched to the maturity of the students. First-graders camp for one night on the school campus in the spring. Second-graders camp for one night on campus in the fall and one night at Lake Casitas in the spring. Students in grades 3-5 camp for two nights, in both the spring and fall, at various regional campgrounds (generally at beach locations).

Middle schoolers enjoy base camping at beach locations in the fall (three nights for sixth-graders and four nights for seventh- and eighth-graders). In the spring, they participate in backpacking trips that last 3-10 nights, depending on their interest and skill level. They also get to choose from many weekend trips scattered throughout the year. Choices are made by ballot during the first week of school. Eighth-graders are required to participate in at least one weekend trip, while the experiences are optional for sixth and seventh-graders.

Before any Outdoor Education experience, students receive an equipment list from their teachers. These lists can also be found on our website on the Resources page: [www.ovs.org/parents/resources](http://www.ovs.org/parents/resources). There, you will also find a helpful list suggesting specific pieces of equipment vetted by our Outdoor Education Coordinator, with links to purchase. Students will meet regularly to discuss the menu, learn about the itinerary, and complete a pack check. It is crucial that every child is prepared with the appropriate equipment.

### **Community Service**

All OVS students participate in community service. The projects are geared to the respective age groups and are determined by the teachers. Projects focus on action rather than fundraising. Past projects have included working at the Ventura County Food Bank, beach clean-up, making blankets for homeless people, planting trees, donating to the Humane Society, and doing trail work with the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy.

### **Washington, D.C. Trip**

Eighth graders take a weeklong trip to Washington, D.C., in the fall after Family Weekend. During this trip, students tour many historic locations and museums with OVS faculty, learning about the history of the United States. The trip emphasizes and

expands upon lessons learned in the eighth grade social studies curriculum. There is an additional fee for this trip.

### **Equestrian Program**

OVS is known for its extraordinary Equestrian program. Our instructors are excellent and have many years of experience. All students are required to have proper equestrian attire: helmet, boots, and long pants. Having your child keep these items at school is best. It is also a good idea to keep a pair of pants at school in case your child wears shorts or a dress on riding day.

The equestrian staff is happy to recommend where to purchase equipment. Again, all students need a properly fitted helmet and boots.

From fourth grade up, students may elect horseback riding in place of PE. The equestrian program has an additional fee and operates on a trimester rather than a semester schedule.

### **Elementary Theme Week**

In the spring, for one week, each elementary grade spends the week studying one country. In addition to learning about the history and culture of the country, students sample food, learn dances, learn certain words, and may take field trips to places related to the country they have been studying.

### **Woodshop**

Primary, elementary, and middle school students take woodshop. Students build a variety of age-appropriate projects.

## **COMMUNICATION**

### **Student/Faculty Directory**

Ojai Valley School publishes a Student/Faculty Directory with both family contact information and staff contact information. The directory is available online through a password-protected website.

### **Teacher Communication**

Each faculty member has e-mail that is regularly checked. Those addresses are available online and through the Front Office. The faculty encourages parents to communicate by email whenever possible as not all classrooms have phones. In middle school, each student is assigned an advisor. The advisor is also a point of contact.

Because of the needs of the students in each grade, the best way to communicate with a teacher varies. For students in primary and elementary divisions, face-to-face communication seems to work best. During drop-off and pick-up, there is usually time to ask a quick question, but the focus for the teacher is to be ready to greet students and begin class on time. If you need to discuss with the teacher or the question requires privacy, it is best to arrange to speak with the teacher after school, call the teacher after school hours, or e-mail the teacher. Teachers in the primary and elementary divisions are in their classrooms for thirty minutes after the school day ends.

For middle school teachers, the preferred method of communication is e-mail or by scheduling an appointment. Many teachers also coach and tutor, so they may not be available after school.

Teachers have faculty meetings each Monday after school and are therefore not available to meet with parents at that time.

While classroom teachers are almost always the first point of contact to resolve concerns, you are welcome to speak to the division coordinator, Assistant Head of Lower Campus, or Head of Lower Campus.

## DRESS CODE

The spirit and purpose of the Ojai Valley School dress code is to uphold a learning environment that contributes to the development of a positive, age-appropriate self-image while maintaining student focus on the academic process and minimizing distraction. The general expectation is that students' clothing should be clean, neat, well-fitting, tasteful, and appropriate for the occasion.

Please choose the daily dress based on the spirit of the dress code and the guidelines below:

- Students of all ages will wear closed-toed shoes.
- Dresses, skirts, pants, and shorts may be worn that are of appropriate size and length.
- Short and long sleeve collared shirts, or official OVS spirit wear, may be worn on any given day.
- For Dress Dinner and special occasions when formal dress is required, age appropriate dresses, skirts, blouses, slacks, coats, shirts and ties, dress shoes and dress socks are suitable. Dress shoes must be modest and safe.
- Non-collared T-shirts are not to be worn over collared shirts. T-shirts may be worn on relaxed dress days only.
- At no time should undergarments and/or straps of undergarments be visible.
- Torn or ragged clothing or shoes are not allowed—this includes cut-offs and clothes that have holes by design.
- “Baggy” oversized pants are not allowed to be worn.
- Pajama pants (even with the OVS logo) may not be worn to school.
- Athletic wear, sweatpants, leggings, soccer shorts, or board shorts may only be worn if the activities of the day warrant them.
- Hats, hoods, and sunglasses may not be worn indoors.
- Wearable devices (such as Smart Watches) that connect to the internet are not permitted during the academic day. Earbuds are not to be worn unless explicit permission is given by a teacher.

### Grooming

- Hair should be clean, a natural color and neatly trimmed or styled in a manner that allows for eye contact during communication. Extreme hairstyles that are distracting and not in the spirit of the dress code are not permitted.
- Students may wear light makeup. Heavy, bright, or dramatic makeup colors are not allowed for any student.



- Students may not have facial piercings or other visible body piercings.
- Students may have pierced ears with one or two holes. Gauge-style earrings are not allowed.

## THE MISCELLANEOUS EXTRAS

### School Socials

The Student Council and Eighth Grade Committee sponsor social events throughout the year. These events are often divided up by elementary and middle school students and take place throughout the school year. Socials may include karaoke, dances, movie nights, BINGO night, and many more activities. Attire is usually “relaxed dress,” but sometimes a costume or theme is involved. Pick-up times will be announced. All events are supervised by OVS faculty or staff.

### Meals

Students’ lunch times are based on their grade, with the youngest students eating first. The students sit at picnic tables outdoors under the pergola, weather permitting. Weekly menus are available upon request (and are subject to change).

Our Food Services staff offers vegetarian and gluten-free options, but since meals are prepared in an open kitchen we are unable to provide a completely gluten-free, cross-contamination-free environment. While every effort is made to identify allergic ingredients to those possibly affected by such ingredients, there is always a risk of contamination with allergic ingredients. Students with specific food allergies or intolerances, and their parents, should meet with our health center staff and food services director prior to the start of school.

Parents may visit campus and occasionally have lunch with their students. Check with the Front Office for lunch times. Parents of resident students are also welcome to join their children for an occasional dinner. Please let the Front Office know if you will join OVS for dinner.

### Dress Dinner

Dress Dinner is scheduled for our resident students on selected Wednesday nights. All resident students are expected to dress formally for this special dinner unless otherwise noted. Often, a recital or other production will follow the dress dinner. If day students are involved in the show, they are welcome to attend dress dinner as long as they have the appropriate attire. Eighth grade day students should plan on attending at least one dress dinner during the school year. Adults joining dress dinner should also wear proper attire.

### Bus

Many of our day students live in Ventura, Oxnard, or surrounding cities and ride the bus. OVS runs a bus service to and from Oxnard and Ventura. See the Resources page ([www.ovs.org/parents/resources](http://www.ovs.org/parents/resources)) for the complete bus schedule and rules. Please note there is an additional fee to utilize this service.

OVS bus drivers are extremely dedicated and professional. You can feel comfortable

with your children on the bus, as the drivers maintain the same behavioral expectations as in the OVS classroom.

For bus parents, it is wise to get cell phone numbers of other bus parents just in case traffic or an emergency prevents you from getting to the bus stop on time. Children in grades 5 and under are not permitted to disembark from the bus unless someone is there to pick them up. If you are running late, you can call another parent and ask them to take responsibility for your child. If no responsible adult is there to pick up your child, they will have to ride the bus back to OVS and be picked up there. Middle school students are allowed to be dropped off if the parent or guardian is not present.

### **School Parking/Student Drop-Off Areas**

OVS has a very well-designed drop-off system at the west entrance. Feel free to pull up and the teachers will be there to help your child to their classroom or car.

Since OVS parking is limited, carpooling is recommended. OVS has a small parking lot on the east side of campus near the Admission Office (paved lot). We also have a lot (gravel lot) on the west side, each accessible from El Paseo Road. The paved lot is for parents picking up or dropping off students in the primary division. Parents of all other grades are asked to use the drop-off or park in the gravel lot at the west entrance. Please do not leave cars unattended in the drop-off circle.

Morning drop-off is typically between 7:45 to 7:55 a.m. Pick-up is at 3:30 p.m. for primary and elementary students and 3:40 p.m. for middle school students. Friday is early release at 3:00 p.m. for all students. Please do not use the kitchen/delivery area for drop-off. It is a dangerous location for pedestrian students (trucks backing up) and is off-limits. Please do not drop off in the street.

### **Student Store**

OVS has a physical student store where Spirit Wear, PE clothes, Outdoor Education equipment and other school supplies may be purchased. The Student Store is located in the outdoor corridor between the science lab quad and Hall-Mounsey Field, between the eighth-grade lockers. The store is typically open for students at lunch, and for parents on Tuesday and Thursday mornings after the All-School meeting.

### **Cell Phones**

Given the nature of OVS as both a day and boarding school, having a cell phone is useful to many students and their parents. Additionally, many families of day students do not live in the Ojai area but in Ventura, Oxnard and Camarillo. **However, day students are not allowed to have their cell phones OR smart watches turned on during school hours, and resident students must turn in their cell phones and/or smart watches to the dorm parent at a designated time in the evening.** The phones and/or smart watches are made available at the end of the next school day. If you need to get a message to your child, call the Front Office, and the staff will make sure your child receives the message. Students are not to use phones for casual conversation but a quick call to connect with a parent or other driver.

### **After-School Care**

OVS provides supervised after-school care for OVS elementary students from the end of

the school day until 5:00 p.m., by which time all day students must be picked up. There is no additional fee for after-school care. Please remember to sign your child out when you pick them up. Many day students will stay after school to play with their friends or take music lessons. When skateboards and bikes are permitted, helmets and safety gear are required.

Middle schoolers can take advantage of Office Hours to get extra help from their teachers on Tuesday-Thursday from 3:30-4:00 p.m.

Any students still on campus at 5:00 p.m. will be sent to the dormitories, where their parents will be called for pick-up.

### **Dorm Stay-Overs**

On occasion, day students may spend the night in the dormitories at OVS. Permission must be granted in advance by the Assistant Head of Campus for a day student to stay over. Contact the Front Office at least a week in advance to make arrangements. The fee for a weekend stay (Friday or Saturday) is \$200 a night, and the fee for a stay during the week is \$125 a night.

### **Holidays**

There are four major holiday breaks during the school year: One week off in November for Thanksgiving, three weeks off during the winter holidays, a week off in February and a week off in April.

The Monday following fall Family Weekend and the Monday following spring Family Weekend are the only times OVS students will have a three or four-day weekend. School is in session on all national/bank holidays that are observed on Mondays.

Please refer to the calendar on the website for the dates of the various breaks. *Parents are requested not to extend holiday periods by having their child absent in the days preceding and following breaks.*

### **Attendance & Tardies**

*Any student arriving on campus after 8:00 a.m. must check in with the Front Office before going to class, to receive a tardy slip.* Any student leaving campus early must be signed out by a guardian at the Front Office. Parents should keep all unexcused absences to a minimum. To fully benefit from our program, there is no substitute for regular daily attendance. Students are considered tardy when arriving late to All School. *Excessive tardies and absences can result in loss of leadership and travel privileges.*

For more information on attendance, absences and tardies, please refer to the Student Handbook for Lower Campus, available at [www.ovs.org/parents/resources](http://www.ovs.org/parents/resources).

**Note: This handbook is a living document and subject to revision as necessitated by calendar and scheduling changes during the school year.**

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