

**OJAI
VALLEY
SCHOOL**

**LOWER CAMPUS
STUDENT AND PARENT HANDBOOK
2025-2026**

OJAI VALLEY SCHOOL
723 El Paseo Road
Ojai, California 93023
(805) 646-1423

February 2025

Dear OVS Families,

The *Student & Parent Handbook* is intended as a guide to help you navigate daily life at Ojai Valley School. We believe it is important to partner with our families and communicate clearly the expectations for all students, whether day or boarding, as it pertains to student conduct, academic responsibility, integrity, and respect for individuals and personal property.

Each student is asked to abide by the guidelines outlined in this handbook. Please take the time to read it carefully with your student, then sign and return the Pledge of Responsibility through our School Forms Online portal. The rules and policies in the handbook are reviewed annually by the administration, approved by the Board of Trustees, and may be revised during the year if necessary. If changes occur, students and parents will be notified.

Beyond the rules and policies, you will find answers to common questions ranging from dress code, cell phone use, campus hours, weekend activities, outdoor equipment, and much more. While no publication can reliably describe every situation that may arise during a student's life at OVS, we hope the handbook addresses the most frequent questions and concerns.

Please reach out to the Head of Campus, dorm parents, advisors, teachers and nurses if you have questions or need help during the year ahead. We are all here to help, and look forward to the school year ahead!

Warmly,

Craig Floyd
Interim Head of School
Ojai Valley School

STUDENT AND PARENT HANDBOOK
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I. BUSINESS & CONTACTS

Providing tools and useful information to help families navigate the Ojai Valley School community.

COMMUNICATION

The main school number is (805) 646-1423. Office hours are 7:50 a.m. to 4:45 p.m., Monday through Friday. We also have a voicemail system. If you know the extension that you want, you may dial (805) 640-2584 and call your party directly or leave a message on their voicemail. Please refer to our website, www.ovs.org, for a full list of emails for teachers and dorm parent staff.

Since students are not allowed to use their phones during the school day, please do not expect routine communication during these times. In an emergency or if you need to speak to your child urgently during the academic day, please call the Ojai Valley School at (805) 646-1423.

BUSINESS OFFICE

The Business Office has a separate telephone line, (805) 640-2575, and fax line, (805) 640-2593, for all account and billing information. This number is to be used exclusively for business matters.

OTHER USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION:

OVS E-mail	ovs@ovs.org
OVS Website	http://www.ovs.org
Business Office	(805) 640-2575
Fax Line, Business Office	(805) 640-2593
Upper Campus	(805) 646-5593
Fax Line, Upper Campus	(805) 933-1096
Lower Campus	(805) 646-1423
Fax Line, Lower Campus	(805) 640-2588
Fax Line, Admission Office	(805) 646-0362
Health Center	(805) 646-1423 ext. 1238
OVS Transportation	(805) 646-1423 ext. 3030

PERMISSION FORMS

The school requires written permission on file from parents or guardians for the registration forms, as listed below. All registration forms must be completed and submitted prior to the start of school.

Pledge of Responsibility
Visitation Rights Form
Student Emergency Contact Information and Medical Release

Medical Questionnaire
Medical Insurance and Credit Card Information
Medication Form
OTC Medication Form
Physical Exam Form
Activity Release Form
Technology Acceptable Use Policy and Pledge
Concussion Information (Middle School Students)

SUNDRY ACCOUNTS

The sundry account is set up for the convenience of the student and his/her parents. It is a charge account to be used by the students to purchase materials sold in the student store, Health Center care, all equestrian charges, camping trips, elective class materials, private lessons, optional enrichment or entertainment programs, and other school-related charges. For resident students, the sundry account may also be used to charge fees for school transportation to and from LAX. Miscellaneous expenses incurred by the students will be billed through the sundry account at cost plus a 10% handling fee, not to exceed \$25.00. The Business Office provides monthly statements. **The balance due must be paid within 30 days, or a student's charging privileges may be suspended.**

II. MISSION, PHILOSOPHY & PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

MISSION

By the time Ojai Valley School students are ready to graduate they will have developed the academic strength, the character, and the self-confidence to meet life's future challenges in an ever-changing world.

PHILOSOPHY

Ojai Valley School's philosophy is contained in the words Integer Vitae, meaning wholeness of life, symmetry of life, soundness of life, and, therefore, poise and strength of life. To accommodate the school philosophy, every effort is made to create an atmosphere for students and staff that is conducive to learning and growing through the framework of a warm family environment.

Guided by this stated philosophy, Ojai Valley School has as its goals and objectives the development of each student's character through the advantageous use of Ojai's natural surroundings, diverse educational community and a strong, professional staff. More specifically, the goals and objectives for each student are outlined in the school philosophy as follows:

- Wholeness of life – Ojai Valley School students are presented with a wide variety of experiences through college preparatory studies, campus life, educational field trips, student activities, athletic programs, and outdoor education. These activities allow

students to explore the extent of their interests and abilities, to know themselves, and to develop an appreciation and respect for other people on a global scale.

- Symmetry of life – Ojai Valley School students are exposed to a well-balanced program, both academic and social, with consistent standards set for each discipline and activity.
- Soundness of life – Towards the development of character, Ojai Valley School students are given responsibilities, which relate to their personal lives and to school affairs. Students have an opportunity to learn, perhaps to fail and to try again. With staff support and guidance, students begin to develop the knowledge and strength needed to make sound judgments.

OVS PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE

Ojai Valley School students are encouraged to explore their interests, know themselves, and develop an appreciation and respect for others on a global scale. By the time they graduate, they will have developed the academic strength, the character, and the self-confidence to meet life's future challenges in an ever-changing world.

The school's philosophy, **Integer Vitae**, means the wholeness of life, symmetry of life, soundness of life, and, therefore, poise and strength of life. To accommodate this, OVS creates an atmosphere for students and staff that is conducive to learning and growing through the framework of a warm family environment.

Soundness of Life

Toward the development of character, OVS students are given responsibilities, both in their personal lives & school affairs. They have an opportunity to learn, perhaps to fail & to try again. With staff support & guidance, students develop the knowledge & strength needed to make sound judgments.

An OVS student:

Exercises Resilience

- Pursues a healthy & balanced lifestyle
- Confidently meets life's future challenges
- Adapts to evolving learning environments to maintain a lifelong investment in education

Thinks Critically

- Resourcefully & creatively solves problems
- Explores interests, develops deep core knowledge, and succeeds academically
- Appreciates & understands multiple perspectives

Wholeness of life

OVS students are presented with a wide variety of experiences through college preparatory studies, campus life, educational field trips, student activities, athletic programs, & outdoor education.

An OVS student:

Embraces Community

- Acts with kindness, empathy & inclusiveness

- Honors & advocates for cultural & global diversity
- Collaborates in ways that contribute to the greater good

Champions the Environment

- Develops a deep appreciation for the outdoors
- Works to protect, preserve & restore the natural environment
- Applies eco-conscious practices, including “leave no trace” habits

Symmetry of Life

OVS students are exposed to a well-balanced program, both academic & social, with consistent standards set for each discipline & activity.

An OVS student:

Acts with Integrity

- Appreciates & respects others
- Values honesty & acts ethically
- Takes responsibility & accountability for actions

Contributes With Sincerity

- Powerfully & effectively communicates
- Serves the community through leadership & shares a joy for learning
- Exhibits independent thinking & a commitment to active, constructive citizenship

III. SCHOOL LIFE

Ojai Valley School is comprised of 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 through fifth grades), and Middle School (sixth through eighth grades). The Upper Campus (ninth through twelfth grades) is located in the east end of Ojai at the end of Reeves Road. You will often hear the campuses referred to as “Lower” and “Upper.” Throughout the year, there are several “One School” events.

Since its inception in 1911, Ojai Valley School has held education and character development at the center of its philosophy and practice. “Educating the whole child” is more than a statement of intent. Our academic, residential life, athletic, and outdoor programs create opportunities for intellectual growth and character development at each level of student maturity. As represented by the oak tree that graces the OVS logo, the strengths of our programs are rooted in integrity, compassion, fairness, responsibility, respect, and perseverance. Toward the development of character and responsibility, we offer the expectations outlined in this Lower Campus Student Handbook.

RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR AND ATTITUDE

We wish to point out to parents and students that the school expects a positive and responsible attitude toward academic, social, athletic, and community service obligations, as well as responsible individual behavior toward school rules.

Study hours, homework, crew jobs, dining hall cleanup, grounds, classroom upkeep, and planning and participating in social and athletic functions are all part of the student's training and involvement with the school.

OVS is, first and foremost, a community. In order to maintain a healthy community where all members are valued and respected, we expect that students uphold their positive behavior and attitude standards on campus, online, and in the greater community. Poor treatment of community members or behaviors that negatively impact the school community may be subject to disciplinary action.

Students who attend Ojai Valley School are expected to attend each of their classes on time and be prepared with their homework assignments and materials. Students are expected to afford their instructors and peers the respect necessary for the completion of a successful class period.

In accordance with our mission to educate the “whole child,” we ask our parents/guardians and students to understand that Ojai Valley School expects a positive and responsible attitude toward academic, social, athletic, and community service obligations as well as responsible individual behavior as it relates to school rules and our code of conduct.

Our commitment to upholding, invigorating, embodying, and assessing our collective values gives us the strength to overcome challenges and to support each other with compassion even when we hold different perspectives. To this end, Ojai Valley School welcomes diversity in its constituents and their opinions.

Ojai Valley School wishes to maintain the policy of trust and in giving as much freedom as good sense dictates, the school assumes that students will live up to our high expectations.

USE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Our twofold goal is to help our second-language learners gain the fluency necessary for academic success and to create a unified, supportive community that promotes learning, service, adventure, and friendships that will last a lifetime. While OVS embraces the diversity of its students, it is essential to the educational aims of our students individually and to promote an inclusive community, that OVS has English as its primary language. With the exception of second-language classes, all instruction is in English, and during the academic day, students are expected to speak English only, including during the lunch meal. This expectation applies to the dorm, the sports field/court, and the dining hall. Second-language students have opportunities to speak their home language after the academic day and in their rooms.

Language acquisition is our focus, which is best served through inclusion and immersion.

NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION

The process of orientation begins with the admission interview and visit. The students are given a tour of the campus. Normally, students will then come for a visit and attend classes. During the

visit, they are assigned a “buddy” to help them feel more comfortable. The rules are reviewed and questions about life at school are answered.

Upon their initial arrival to begin school, they are again assigned a fellow student as a “buddy.” The Assistant Head of Campus takes care of providing the needed books and class schedules. The new student’s advisor or homeroom teacher is assigned to help with orientation. Within the first few weeks of school, the new student meets with their advisor, Head of Campus, or Assistant Head of Campus to review any concerns.

Details of dorm life are provided to new resident students by the dorm parent. The dorm parent will communicate with parents or guardians on a regular basis.

New students are introduced and welcomed at our community All-School meetings. All students are reviewed at a division or full faculty meeting.

CELL PHONES, LAPTOPS, AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Cell Phones

Cell phones and wearable devices must be turned off and stored in a student’s locker during the academic day. Students are not permitted to use their cell phones during the day. If needed, students can call home from the front office.

Cell phones and other technologies have great potential benefits to add or detract from an educational environment. OVS students are expected to act with maturity when using cell phones or other technologies and to be discerning about the appropriate time and place of their use.

Resident students must turn in their cell phones and any other internet-connected devices to the dorm parent at a designated time in the evening. The use of a cell phone is a privilege; students who abuse this privilege may lose their cell phone access. However, parent/guardian communication will be allowed.

Wearable Technology

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.

Tablets/Laptop Computers

In Middle School (grades 6-8), tablets/laptop computers are required for educational purposes in core classes. All Middle School students receive a Chromebook as a part of the 1:1 school-loaned Chromebook program. An additional laptop is not necessary for academic use.

Specific guidelines for computer use and general standards for behavior are detailed in the OVS [Technology Policy and Pledge](#), which must be reviewed and signed annually by parents and students. The use of technology must always be legal, ethical, and consistent with the school's

philosophy and its general standards for community behavior.

All tablets/laptop computers must have approved anti-virus software installed with a subscription valid for the entire academic year.

GENERAL TECHNOLOGY GUIDELINES

Electronic devices used improperly may be confiscated and additional consequences may apply.

All media must have the appropriate rating for the age of students using the product. Media with a parental advisory warning or rated beyond the students age is not allowed. Media with inappropriate themes are not allowed, regardless of rating.

Use of electronic devices for entertainment/communication is not allowed during the academic day or during designated study hours (as stated in the cell phones/electronics section of this handbook). Resident student's cell phones must be turned in to dorm parents and checked out at appropriate times. Games and movies must be of appropriate age rating. Students are not to have any inappropriate music, photos, or videos on any electronic device. Games and music with a violent or otherwise inappropriate theme are not allowed, regardless of rating.

The dorm parents retain absolute censorship rights regarding appropriate room decorations, games, music, etc., as well as the use of all electronic equipment.

It is the expectation that all students of Ojai Valley School adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. This expectation extends to the use of technology, in particular, ChatGPT and other similar AI writing generators (both current and future). As such, the school has created a set of guidelines for acceptable use.

- The use of technology and AI writing generators to generate entire assignments is prohibited.
- Technology and AI writing generators may be used to assist and supplement, but not replace, student writing. If used, they are to be treated as outside sources and need to be formatted as quotes with proper citations.
- Expectations and rules will apply to all technology and AI writing generators, including subject-specific programs, such as ones designated for math or science.
- Teachers may use their discretion on specific assignments to prohibit the use of this technology on a case-by-case basis. It is the responsibility of the student to follow all parts of the instructions given for all assignments.
- Misuse of technology, including AI writing generators, will be treated in the same manner as other academic integrity violations such as plagiarism and academic dishonesty. This includes an initial official written warning to be put in your academic record, a second offense to result in an academic disciplinary contract, and any further infractions will be met with a DAC wherein expulsion is a possibility.

DAY STUDENT INFORMATION

School hours on the Lower Campus are 8:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. (M-TH) and 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (F). OVS provides after-school care for OVS students (Pre-K- 5th grade) until 5:00 p.m., by which time all day students must be picked up. There is no additional fee for Aftercare. Parents of Pre-K - grade 5 students must sign their child out with Aftercare staff when picked up. As safety is our number one concern, please do not ask your child to meet you at your vehicle. There is no designated supervision for Middle School students after 3:30 p.m. (M-TH), 3:00 p.m. (F).

Students who stay after school may do their homework while waiting for their parents to pick them up. Students in grades 2-8 may schedule office hours, with their teacher Tuesday-Friday, until 4:00 p.m. Students may also stay after school for music lessons and Aftercare.

Day students are encouraged to participate in some aspects of boarding life. For evening and weekend activities, day students must make arrangements to participate in the activities with the Front Office by noon on Thursday. While spending time in the boarding program, day students are expected to follow the same rules and guidelines as the resident students.

To spend the night in the dorm, a day student and parent must fill out and sign an Overnight Stay Request Form (found online or in the Front Office), one week in advance. The Head of Campus and dorm parent give permission for the student to spend the night and participate in activities.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are designed to challenge students and to give them opportunities to develop independence and confidence. The Book and Activity Fee covers the transportation cost for most school field trips. Occasionally, an additional classroom trip will be added which may include a nominal fee. Some weekend trips for middle school students may be required for course credit (for example, Performing Arts or outdoor education trips).

Students are expected to wear school dress or spirit wear on most school field trips. Spirit wear is available in our school store. Please label all outerwear.

DRESS CODE

The dress code is designed to maintain a focused, respectful, and positive learning environment while allowing for individual expression. Students are expected to dress in a manner that reflects consideration of the academic setting, daily activities, safety, and community values. The school reserves the right to ask any student to change clothes if their clothing is inappropriate or offensive. The following guidelines apply:

- Clothing should be clean, neat, and in good condition. Students should avoid wearing clothing with rips, tears, or excessive wear; this includes clothing that has holes by design. Students may wear clothing that does not have a hemmed seam as long as the fraying is minimal.

- Clothing should fit appropriately, avoiding excessively baggy or tight garments. Tops and bottoms should avoid low cuts, exposed midriffs, and excessively short shorts, skirts, and dresses (which must be at least mid-thigh). Clothing must cover undergarments, providing full coverage when standing, sitting, kneeling, or bending over.
- Pajamas (including slippers) are not considered appropriate attire in any area outside of the dormitory.
- Closed-toed shoes are required.
- Clothing may not advertise alcohol or drugs or display sexually suggestive, graphically violent, or offensive statements.
- Hats, hoods, and sunglasses may not be worn indoors.
- **For Dress Dinners 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.

GROOMING

- Grooming should be neat, with natural hair colors, and minimal makeup. Piercings are limited to earrings, with no visible body piercings allowed.

ATHLETIC WEAR FOR ALL STUDENTS

Athletic shoes and socks are to be kept at school. OVS P.E. shirts and shorts are required for students in grades 6-8 and can be purchased from the Athletic Director at the start of the school year, and at various assigned times throughout the year.

Some sports seasons may require additional equipment such as shin guards, cleats, soccer socks, team shorts, etc.

Swimsuit: All students are required to wear a modest one-piece bathing suit for P.E. (goggles are recommended, but not required). Other conservative style suits (e.g. tankinis) are allowed on social outings and weekends.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION TRIPS

A wide variety of extended camping, backpacking, and rock climbing trips are taken throughout the school year, with the first trip leaving in September, shortly after the opening of school. A full list of required equipment is included in your registration materials, as well as listed on our website, www.ovs.org. The website includes a list of links of recommended gear to purchase.

We encourage families to purchase quality gear that will last several years. Students are expected to come to the opening of school with all of their outdoor gear. If you need clarification about what and/or where to purchase camping equipment, please contact the school's Outdoor Education Coordinator.

CYCLING, SKATEBOARDING, ROLLERBLADING, WHEELS

Any student participating in the above activities must always wear a buckled, fitted helmet and other appropriate protective equipment for that activity. These activities may only be done at designated times and in areas approved by the faculty.

EIGHTH-GRADE GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

To graduate from the eighth grade, all students must meet the following requirements:

- Successfully complete and participate in all activities for the duration of their enrollment in the eighth-grade program.
- Achieve a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.0 for the entire year.
- Achieve a cumulative effort average of at least 3.0 for the entire year.
- A student must not receive an “F” in any class for the final semester grade.
- All students must participate in the fall and spring camping trips, one weekend adventure, traditional class hikes, symphony trips and the Washington D.C. trip. Students facing serious disciplinary action may, at the discretion of the school, be prohibited from participating in any and all graduation-related activities.

ABSENCES & TARDIES

To fully benefit from our program, there is no substitute for regular daily attendance. Time away from school should be restricted to scheduled breaks. A yearly calendar is posted on our website for your reference.

School begins at 8:00 a.m. Any student arriving on campus after 8:00 a.m. must check in to the Front Office prior to going to class. Any student arriving after 8:05 will receive a tardy slip to access class. Excessive absences and tardies may impact a student’s grade, access to special trips, participation in sports, participation in performing arts, and leadership opportunities.

If a child is absent, parents must call the Front Office by 8:30 a.m. to report the absence.

Any student leaving campus before the end of the school day must report to the Front Office and be signed out by their parent/guardian prior to leaving.

Ojai Valley School considers an absence to be excused, with parent permission, for one of the following reasons: student illness (including medical appointments), family emergencies, funerals, or religious holidays. The general school expectation for students who miss assignments during an excused absence is as follows: It is the expectation that students of the Ojai Valley School promptly complete every assignment given throughout the course of the year. Students will have one day to make up assignments for each day of an excused absence. Up to

one week will be given to make up quizzes and tests. Each teacher may, at his or her discretion, modify this expectation.

Absences for reasons other than those listed above are strongly discouraged. **Students will be given opportunities to complete missed work *only* under the following limited conditions:**

- **Parents must notify the Assistant Head or Head of Campus** at least one week in advance of any planned absence.
- **It is the student's responsibility to make advance arrangements** with teachers to complete all work that will be missed. Middle School students are asked to email teachers regarding work missed and obtain class notes as soon as they are able. When possible, the student should arrange times to take quizzes and tests or submit projects prior to leaving for their planned absence.
- Parents must recognize that it is not possible for teachers to recreate class instruction and discussion that took place during the student's absence.
- Absences and tardies that do not qualify as excused may adversely affect a student's academic and effort grades.

Specifically for Middle School: tests, quizzes or projects that are delinquent for longer than the allotted time frame will be penalized 10% per day until the assignment is submitted. Whether the result of an absence or failure to submit an assignment, work that is missing for an excessive period of time will be considered delinquent. Delinquent assignments will be scored as a zero until submitted, and at 50% of their total value after submission.

HEALTH CENTER PROTOCOLS

Circumstances in which a student may be sent home:

- Fever over 100 degrees fahrenheit
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Any unusual discharge or drainage from the eyes, nose, ears, or wounds
- When diagnosed by a doctor as having a communicable disease requiring isolation (Flu, pink eye, ect.)
- If student has pediculosis (head lice) and has not received treatment (Please ask Health Center of pediculosis policy)
- When diagnosed with a condition that requires 24 hour observation by a nurse
- Student requires treatment out of the scope of the school nurse practice
- Student is found to be a threat to themselves or to others
- When diagnosed with an illness requiring intensive education and treatment (Diabetes)

If the student is a resident, the Health Center staff will attempt to arrange for either the parent or guardian to take the student home. If this is not immediately possible, then the nurse, and/or staff under the direction of the nurse, will provide care for the student until

the parent or guardian can retrieve their child.

When a student may come back to school:

- If student has been fever-free for at least 24 hours without fever reducing medication
- If vomiting and/or diarrhea has stopped for 24 hours
- If symptoms of cold/flu are over, student may attend school with a minor, clear fluid nasal drip
- If eye irritation and drainage have stopped and medical treatment received
- If an infections wound is properly covered and medical treatment received
- If after being diagnosed with communicable disease that requires isolation(Flu, pink eye, ect.), the medical provider provides a written release for the student to return to school
- If pediculosis is being effectively treated (Please ask Health Center of pediculosis policy)
- Following a mental health crisis, a doctor provides a written release for the student to return to school
- Following surgery, significant injury, or having received a new diagnosis of a major illness, a doctor must provide a written release to attend school and explicit instructions regarding care, medication administration, activity level and follow-up treatment.

All medical releases, orders and recommendations written by a local licensed medical provider must be submitted to the Health Center. The Health Center staff will then confidentially convey the information to the appropriate staff: dorm parents, teacher, faculty, coaches, and administration.

ATHLETIC/CO-CURRICULAR ELIGIBILITY

Poor academic performance (any grade below a C-), or behavioral concerns, may bring into question a student's participation on an athletic team. The school recognizes the need for non-academic outlets and will use ineligibility sparingly. These evaluations will occur weekly and focus on an individual student's effort and attitude as well as achievement. Ineligible status will be removed once the student has shown sufficient improvement.

Participation in extracurricular activities (drama, weekend outdoor education trips, electives, etc.) may also be restricted if academic and behavioral standards are not met.

Students absent during the school day may not participate in after-school activities. A doctor's note is required for any extended absence from athletics.

Eligibility for Middle School Sports Teams:

Poor academic performance or behavioral concerns may affect a student's eligibility to remain on an athletic team. Eligibility will be assessed weekly.

Marks: If a student has not worked off their Marks, they may not be eligible to participate in sports the following week.

Homework Club: If a student is required to attend Homework Club for two consecutive weeks, they may not be ineligible to play the following week.

Contract: Students on a behavior contract may not be allowed to participate in a team until the terms of their contract are fulfilled.

Behavioral Expectations: Students must adhere to school behavior standards. Any serious behavioral issues may lead to ineligibility for participation in sports.

Attendance: Regular school attendance is necessary. Excessive absences may impact eligibility.

These guidelines are in place to ensure that students maintain a balance between academic responsibilities and extracurricular activities.

IV. SCHOOL COUNSELING

School Counseling: Solution-Focused Social-Emotional Support and Service

OVERVIEW

Ojai Valley School is committed to a holistic education so students can meet life's future challenges. In the school's effort to provide support to each student as they reach their goals parents/legal guardians or school faculty refer students, or students may self-refer, for counseling-related services. School Counseling is considered a regular service and part of the educational experience at the Ojai Valley School. The focus of the service is to educate students on their social and emotional skills while enhancing their well-being and improving their coping skills. The counseling support and services provided to the students for education on social-emotional skills and topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Teacher and/or parent consultation
- Classroom instruction
- Classroom observations
- Individual and group counseling meetings*
- Crisis Support and Intervention
- Interventions consisting of understanding, processing, educating, and responding to conflict, academic, social, and/or personal challenges impacting the student or learning environment
- Advisory programming
- Recommendations and referrals

CONFIDENTIALITY

The School Counselor may share information with parents/legal guardians, school faculty, or personnel who work with your child on a need-to-know basis in order to provide better support

for the student. The School Counselor by law must share information with various personnel in certain circumstances:

- Presenting a serious danger to self or others
- Suspicion, evidence, or disclosure of abuse or neglect, past or present
- Threat to school security

Additionally, Cal.Ed. Code 49602 indicates that personal information shared by pupils age 12 or older is confidential, even from parents, except in exceptional circumstances such as an emergency wellness situation. The Student and Counselor continually collaborate on how to share information, new skills, themes, etc. as the aim of the service is to empower students to communicate, advocate, and invite people in to provide more support.

*The School Counselor welcomes parents to reach out and discuss their preferred approach to the School Counselor initiating individual or group counseling with their child. This is deemed a regular service at OVS but often can be sensitive for children. Preferences range from letting the child initiate services on their own to parents requesting prior notice for individual and group counseling. Should you have a preference please reach out to the School Counselor. This is only for individual and group counseling and does not relate to the other services provided. Should you have any questions regarding the services provided, please reach out to the School Counselor.

SUBSTANCE USE REPORTING

Students who are concerned about their own or a peer's substance use may seek confidential help from OVS's counselor or health center staff. The counselor and health center staff do not report violations of school rules to parents or school administrators unless a student's safety or well-being, or the well-being of other students, is in question. The counselor and/or health center staff will help students understand what kind of support and intervention is available to them, as well as making sure that students are aware of the school's disciplinary consequences for substance use. OVS's counselor and health center staff can play an important role in helping ensure students are safe, healthy and aware of resources for their education and well-being.

Additionally, students can proactively seek support by reaching out to a Dean or Head of Residential Life, an Assistant Head of Campus, or Head of Campus who may connect them with counseling and support resources without risking expulsion. If engagement with a counselor or support resources leads to a treatment plan requiring the student to leave campus, the student may be granted a medical leave of absence.

V. RESIDENTIAL LIFE

Resident students participate in a vibrant community of motivated students and develop friendships that last a lifetime. All OVS residents live on campus in school dormitories and are supervised by dorm parents. They typically share a dorm room with one other student and spend time in common areas with peers for studying, meals, and recreational activities. OVS provides a safe and nurturing environment and strives to teach resident students independence, collaboration, and integrity. We expect our students to work hard, however, we also enjoy a relaxed school setting where students can have fun together and be themselves.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Students should bring their own pillows, blankets, comforters, towels, toiletries and feminine hygiene products. The school provides clean bed linens regularly. Please refer to supply lists on the website at <http://www.ovs.org/parents/resources/> for detailed clothing requirements. **All clothing MUST be marked.**

The only electrical appliances allowed in dormitory rooms are desk lamps and electric clocks. All electronic devices should be labeled with the student's name. Electric blankets, electric heaters, irons, television sets, hotpots, and other such appliances are NOT allowed. Fire department regulations restrict the use of extension cords and only allow for the use of power bars with built-in circuit breakers. In order to be in compliance with fire, safety, and school policy, candles, halogen lights, and holiday lights are prohibited. Battery-operated lights are permitted for decoration. Parents are encouraged to provide security devices for their child's computer, as well as surge protectors. All computers and electrical equipment must be properly secured during vacations.

All students should provide their own locks (with two keys) for closets and/or lockboxes, in which to keep valuables. This reduces the temptation to "permanently borrow" important items. Students are not allowed to keep large amounts of cash in their rooms.

Students are financially responsible for any damage done to school property beyond that of normal wear and tear. A statement of charges will be included on the sundry account.

School supply lists are posted online at <http://www.ovs.org/parents/resources/>

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS AND ALLOWANCES

For resident students, we offer the option of personal accounts, which act as "bank accounts" and are accessed through the Resident Life Office. You may deposit any amount into your child's account and they have the option of withdrawing up to \$25.00 per week. If necessary, a larger amount may be made available with permission from the parent and dorm parent. Deposits may be made to your child's account through the Business Office. Checks should be made payable to Ojai Valley School, marked **personal account**, and the child's name in the memo field.

To lessen the possibility of loss, cash should always be kept in a personal account where it will be available when needed. **Students may keep no more than \$25 in their rooms.** Any cash, or expensive devices, should be locked up when not in use.

LAUNDRY

All students must have their clothing marked with their first and last names. Students should bring a laundry bag/basket and detergent from home. Students are required to do their own laundry. Laundry facilities are available on campus. Students will be instructed on how to do their laundry correctly by their dorm parents.

CREW JOBS

Resident students perform crew jobs in order to maintain an orderly living environment in the dorms. They include: vacuuming hallways and recreation rooms, washing mirrors, watering plants, emptying trash containers, cleaning the laundry room, collecting recyclable items, flag duty, etc.

FOOD

The school prepares a well-balanced, tasteful diet for the students. We require that food taken be balanced and of appropriate portions. We encourage healthy choices for snacks. All personal food is to be kept in a small container under dorm parent supervision. We discourage sending large amounts of snacks. Students are not allowed to bring sodas, energy drinks and caffeinated drinks (including teas and powdered mixes) back from town or order online. Sugary foods and snacks lacking nutrition should not be brought to school.

TELEPHONE CALLS

While the student is making the adjustment to dormitory living, the student should not rely on daily or frequent telephone communication from home. Weekly or twice-weekly calls seem to be the appropriate amount for most students.

Students are often busy after school from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Incoming calls should be placed between 4:00-5:00. and 8:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. (Elementary time for an evening call is from 8:15 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.) For elementary students, study hall in the evening is generally from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Sunday-Thursday) and Middle School study hall is generally 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Weekends are an excellent time to connect with your resident student.

Parents and Guardians should make arrangements with the resident staff if calls need to be made after 9:15 p.m.

Cell phones may not be on or used during the school day or study hall, unless specifically directed by a teacher for educational purposes. Resident student cell phones are collected during study hall and before lights out each night and are reissued after school. Students are not allowed phones during meal time, outside time or before school.

Student cell phones should be equipped with parental controls that limit internet usage to age-appropriate activities.

MAIL

Letters and Packages for students should be sent in care of the school as addressed below. Note, there is no weekend mail delivery on campus.

Ojai Valley School
510 Country Club Drive, Ojai CA 93023
Attn: Lower Campus with student's name

TRAVEL FOR SCHOOL BREAKS

At the beginning and end of each school break, overnight supervision and transportation is provided to and from Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) *only* for students who have an airline reservation. We cannot make exceptions for anyone who wishes to pick up their child from the airport. If you plan to use this service, please contact the Transportation Department at transportation@ovs.org and your child's dorm parent for details. Copies of airline tickets should be sent to the Transportation Department and your child's dorm parent **THREE WEEKS PRIOR** to each holiday. Vacation travel forms are available on the [Resources](#) page of our website. Airline reservations and ticket purchases must be made by the parents for Opening Day, Thanksgiving Break, Holiday Break, Winter Break, Spring Break, and the end of the school year. **Please contact the airlines regarding unaccompanied minor regulations. Any and all fees for unaccompanied minor services must be paid by the parent/guardian at the time of booking. Contact the Transportation Department to report these arrangements.** All other students should be picked up before 8:00 p.m. on the day break begins. Hiring a Ride-Share company such as Uber and Lift are not an option for Lower Campus residents.

Private shuttle service can be arranged by the parent/guardian if a Friday departure is desired. However, the student is not allowed to leave before 3:00 p.m. and must return between 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Sunday.

The Resident Coordinator must approve any alterations to the travel dates and times. Students should not miss additional days of school before or after a scheduled vacation. These days taken will be considered unexcused absences.

Following all breaks, resident students must return to campus on Sunday between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. (arriving no sooner than 3:00 p.m.).

VISITS FROM PARENTS

The school welcomes parental visits. It is helpful, however, if the times are scheduled for weekdays after 3:30 p.m. Students can be picked up at 3:00 p.m. on Fridays. Parents should always check the weekend schedule, as off-campus excursions are a regular part of the weekend

program. If you wish to take your child off campus during a visit, you must check out and check back in with the appropriate dorm parent or weekend supervisor, as well as sign in and out at the Front Office. Arrangements for visits during "academic hours" or study hall should be made in advance with the school.

In the case of visits from friends or relatives, advance written permission from the parent or guardian is required. Additionally, the student must obtain prior permission from their dorm parent and check with the Resident Coordinator to obtain school permission. Due to the variety of athletic, recreational, and academic field trips, it is important to pre-plan activities.

LEAVING CAMPUS

Prior to any students leaving campus, their parent or guardian must call the dorm parents to obtain permission. They must also sign them out in person in the Front Office during office hours. After office hours, all students must check out with resident staff or the teacher on duty.

RESIDENT WEEKEND PROCEDURE

The number of weekends a student may spend away from campus is dependent on a number of factors such as his/her age, academic and behavioral standing, distance to his/her home, and family situation. Operating in *loco parentis*, the school must determine each case on its own merit. There are, however, certain rules and routines that are followed:

- Parents, guardians, and family members picking up or returning students should cooperate with the weekend sign-out procedures. **All students leaving campus must sign out at the Front Office and check out with the resident staff.**
- Transportation is not provided for weekends home. For transportation to the airport, all arrangements, including payment, should be made by the parent or guardian before the time of departure.
- Arrangements to go home must be made by **Thursday at noon**. Students are required to fill out an Off Campus Weekend Overnight form and parents are required to call, or confirm in writing, who the student will leave with, where they will be going, and when they will be returned to campus. The person returning the student must check in with the staff on duty or Front Office.
- In the event one student is to visit another student's family, the school **must have** a written invitation from the host family to the Resident Coordinator. In addition, a letter from the parents of the student being invited should be submitted by Thursday noon. We encourage both families to communicate directly on travel arrangements and activities. In the event of a home visit, a **parent or guardian must be present at all times** for supervision. The school reserves the right to not allow a visit due to discipline, academic, or other concerns.
- When a resident student visits another student's home, appropriate behavior is expected. Negative or inappropriate conduct away from the school, which reflects on the OVS community, will be subject to the school taking appropriate disciplinary action.

- Students **should not be picked up** for the weekend **before 3:00 p.m.** on Friday. The Resident Coordinator must approve any early departures. **There is no guaranteed adult supervision before 5:00 p.m. on Sundays for arriving families.** Students are due back on campus between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Sunday evening.

If a student is ill and not able to return on time, please call the dorm parent by 6:00 p.m. Repeated late returns of any weekend visit may result in loss of weekend privileges and town time.

FIVE-DAY RESIDENT WEEKEND PERMISSION PROCEDURE

Five-day resident students will adhere to the same rules and regulations as full-time resident students. Arrangements for a five-day resident to stay the weekend must be made by Thursday at noon.

There is an additional fee for five-day residents staying at school for any part of the weekend. Please go to [Resources](#) for fee information, and to print and sign the overnight request form.

MEDICAL ITEMS

The storing and dispensing of all drugs, medicines (including homeopathic), vitamins, pain relievers, and any over-the-counter drugs will be the responsibility of the school nurse. Information regarding prescriptions and medicines **MUST** be directed to the nurse. All medications must be clearly labeled in English.

Medications are not to be kept in student rooms, lockers, or in their personal possession without the approval of the Health Center.

Resident students' prescription medications will remain in the Health Center to be dispensed by resident staff and Health Center staff according to prescription medication protocol, with the following exceptions, after review by nurses:

- Asthma rescue inhalers
- EpiPens

Parents of students taking prescription medications are expected to notify the Health Center. All medications need to remain in their original packaging, with prescription information written in English, and must be dropped off at the Health Center prior to the start of school. If an international student is prescribed medication in their country of origin, please plan to establish care at the beginning of the school year with an appropriate local specialist. The Health Center may assist with referrals and setting up care.

Resident students who are ill may only be excused from class or sports attendance by the school nurse and should check with a resident counselor directly before or at breakfast. Students should not consider themselves excused from classes until they are assessed by resident staff, health center staff or the Head of Campus. Students who do not attend classes due to poor health must adhere to medical restrictions and may not participate in athletic or co-curricular activities without approval from the Health Center and the Head of Campus.

VI. HOSTING RESIDENT STUDENTS GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

Ojai Valley School celebrates its community, and we welcome our families of both resident and day students to open their homes to each other's children during the weekends and vacations. This section provides information that will help facilitate the process of hosting an OVS resident student and promote safe and positive experiences in host homes.

PERMISSIONS

While we encourage students to spend off-campus time together, we do need written permission from the parents/guardians of visiting students and host families. These should be submitted to the Front Office at ovs@ovs.org no later than 12 p.m. on Thursday afternoon. Since we often need to ask follow-up questions, please indicate the best method and time for contact. Weekend plans will not be approved until these permissions are in place.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

When hosting, please consider this continued "residential" status of hosted students and help them behave in ways consistent with OVS standards. Therefore, parents should be present when hosting Ojai Valley School students and be aware of the activities of their student guests. If you have questions about appropriate activities and/or behavior for hosted OVS students, please contact the Head of School or Assistant Head of School, Student Life for guidance.

COMMUNICATION

When hosting or allowing your student to stay in another's home, it is prudent to communicate with parents/guardians beforehand to establish what your expectations are for the visit regarding transportation, activities, supervision, and conduct. Parents often have different degrees of comfort regarding student autonomy, and it is best to discuss these at the outset.

In the event of a problem, parents should be prepared to immediately follow up with students under their supervision and be willing to notify directly the school and the parents of students who are not able to meet their family expectations.

VII. STUDENT CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE

Ojai Valley School students are expected to behave in a manner as to reflect favorably on themselves and the school. **Above all else Ojai Valley School expects its students' decisions, actions, and words to reflect a respect for the dignity of fellow students, staff, and campus visitors. It is the responsibility of each member of our community to demonstrate a basic generosity of spirit toward others, regardless of their differences.**

In accordance with our mission to educate the "whole child," we ask our parents/guardians and students to understand that Ojai Valley School expects a positive and responsible attitude toward academic, social, athletic, and community service obligations as well as responsible individual

behavior as it relates to school rules and our code of conduct. Study hours, homework, crew jobs, cafeteria clean-up, stable maintenance, grounds and classroom upkeep, and planning and participation in social and athletic functions are all part of the student's enthusiastic involvement with the school.

Our commitment to upholding, invigorating, embodying, and assessing our collective values gives us the strength to overcome challenges and to support each other with compassion even when we hold different perspectives. To this end, Ojai Valley School welcomes diversity in its constituents and their opinions.

Ojai Valley School wishes to maintain the policy of trust and, in giving as much freedom as good sense dictates, the school expects that students will live up to our high expectations.

Students and parents must recognize that there are instances in which the Ojai Valley School community extends into the larger community and accept that students are held to the same expectations for conduct as if they are on the campus itself. Some examples of these are off-campus activities--both supervised and unsupervised, camp trips, field trips, and sporting competitions. Student conduct is subject to OVS scrutiny and potential discipline if they engage in activities that put the school or its members at risk.

MINOR OFFENSES

Faculty members, dorm parents, or the Assistant Head of Campus ordinarily handle minor offenses against school rules and policies. When a student fails to meet commitments, marks may be given as a form of discipline. A mark stands for a 10-minute unit of school service time. For a more serious infraction or an accumulation of minor infractions, a student may be sent before the Disciplinary Committee.

PROBATION AND SOCIAL/ACADEMIC CONTRACTS

Probation and contracts involve written limitations placed upon a student's academic or social behavior. The terms of probation or contract are set by the Head of Campus. Failure to meet the terms may result in a Disciplinary Committee (DC) meeting and in the student's dismissal.

HANDS-OFF POLICY

Students need to be aware that there is a hands-off policy at all times. Shoving, pushing, play fighting, etc. are strictly prohibited. Any act of excessive affection that makes students or faculty uncomfortable is inappropriate. Allowable behavior would include a high-five, a handshake, or a quick hug "hello" or "goodbye."

MAJOR OFFENSES

Ojai Valley School students are expected to behave in such a manner as to reflect positively to themselves and to the school. As stated in the school philosophy:

"Towards the development of character, Ojai Valley School students are given responsibilities which relate to their personal lives and to school affairs. Students have an opportunity to learn, perhaps to fail and try again. With staff support and guidance, students begin to develop the knowledge and strength needed to make sound judgments."

In recognition of the school's responsibilities to the law and of the school's responsibilities to other members of the community, certain types of behavior are unacceptable to the school. These types of behavior are classified as "Major Offenses" and include the following:

- 1. Violations of honesty, integrity, and consideration for other members of the school community, which include, but are not limited to:**
 - a. Lying**
 - b. Cheating and plagiarism**
 - c. Stealing/Theft**
 - d. Willful property damage or harm to oneself or another student or the threat to same**
 - e. Absence from school and/or leaving school grounds without official permission**
 - f. Weapons (use or possession of)**

- 2. Violations involving drugs and alcohol which include, but are not limited to:**
 - a. Use and/or possession of any harmful drugs or chemicals or drug paraphernalia**
 - b. Use and/or possession of alcohol /paraphernalia**
 - c. Use and/or possession of marijuana/paraphernalia**
 - d. Use and/ or possession of cigarettes or tobacco/nicotine products**
 - e. Use and possession of vaping paraphernalia**

- 3. Violations involving explicit sexual activity**

- 4. Disrespectful behavior**

- 5. Possession of firearms or other weapons**

- 6. Violations of the OVS Technology Acceptable Use Policy, including, but are not limited to:**
 - a. Misuse of computer equipment**
 - b. Introduction of computer viruses**
 - c. Downloading or use of any software without prior school approval**
 - d. Unauthorized access to "online" services**

- e. **Misuse of electronic mailing services, including cell phones, to harass, intimidate, physically bully or psychologically bully a person or Ojai Valley School community.**
- f. **Use of the Internet, computer software, or video games involving acts of violence, racial hatred, drugs, alcohol, or explicit sex**
- g. **Posting statements or photos in any print or online publication including but not limited to social media sites, of Ojai Valley School students or staff for the purpose of humiliation, harassment, bullying, degradation, or insult.**

WEAPONS

Use or possession of any weapon is against school rules. This includes guns (real or play), knives, slingshots, and any other implement designed for or used to harm or threaten others. Students are not allowed to bring knives on camping trips. Violations of this policy may constitute a major offense.

HARASSMENT

Students may not create a hostile environment for one another, which involves physical or verbal acts of bullying, teasing, taunting, hitting, and/or sexual harassment. Students may not use electronic means on or off campus to bully, harass, or tease other students. Violations of a serious nature may result in harsh disciplinary action. Significant or repeated violations will be treated as a major offense.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Any student or group of students involved with a major offense **will most likely be dismissed** from the Ojai Valley School community or face other disciplinary action. In order to avoid any misunderstanding between school officials, parents, and/or students regarding major offenses and any disciplinary action that may result, the following procedures exist:

Prospective parents and students are informed during the admission process as to what constitutes a major offense.

As a condition of enrolling at Ojai Valley School, parents and students must read the Student Handbook, and sign the **Pledge of Responsibility**, which outlines major offenses. Students are reminded as to what constitutes a major offense at the beginning and throughout the school year.

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE

Ojai Valley School officials are aware of each student's individual rights and have developed disciplinary procedures that prioritize the well-being of the student body, therefore, when a student does commit a major offense or is suspected of committing a major offense, the following occurs:

When possible, the parents are called immediately by either the Assistant Head or the Head of Campus and informed of the problem, as it exists at the moment.

The Assistant Head or the Head of Campus informs the student as to what procedure(s) will follow. The Assistant Head or Head of Campus will appoint faculty members to a Disciplinary Committee that will impartially collect information regarding the major offense, including a full and complete hearing from the student involved. Members of the Committee will develop a written recommendation for final review and decision from the Head of Campus.

The Head or Assistant Head of Campus will then meet with the student and parents as soon as possible, to discuss the final action that will be taken.

Ojai Valley School has sole discretion to act on information relating to major offenses.

REPORTING DISCIPLINARY ISSUES OR INJUSTICES

While it is our mission to foster a community built on fairness, compassion, respect, and integrity, it is possible that a community member feels wronged by another member of the community. It is the goal of school officials to investigate such issues in the hopes of creating a teachable moment and prioritizing the well-being of all community members. If an offense is deemed to be a major offense school officials will take more serious action, which may result in removing members from the community. If you believe an injustice or disciplinary offense has occurred, Students, Parents, and Guardians are encouraged to report these issues to school officials. Because all reports are unique, community members can report to Teachers, Dorm Parents, the Assistant Head of Campus, or the Head of Campus based on their comfort level and the severity of the offense.

VIII. PLEDGE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Each student and parent or guardian must sign a pledge of responsibility, which acknowledges reading, understanding, and acceptance of the handbook, especially the sections on behavior and discipline.

This pledge, as stated below, is a required form that must be signed by the student and parent, and submitted during the registration process prior to the start of school:

We, the undersigned student and the parent/guardian of the student, have thoroughly read the applicable Ojai Valley School (“OVS”) Student Handbook. We understand each section contained therein, and where there was a question, we contacted the OVS Head of Campus for clarification. We paid particular attention to the sections on *Discipline* and *Responsible Behavior and Attitude*. We will take full responsibility for our actions and note that in the event of absence, withdrawal or dismissal from OVS, no portion of the paid or outstanding “Charges,” as that term is defined in the Enrollment Contract, will be refunded, waived or canceled, except as provided for in Section 1 of the Enrollment Contract.