



Oyster River Middle School Student Handbook 2023-2024

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OYSTER RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL

STUDENT HANDBOOK 2023-2024

New England League of Middle Schools

Spotlight School

1 Coe Drive, Durham, NH 03824

Telephone: (603) 868-2820

"Working together to engage every learner."

Welcome to Oyster River Middle School. The information in this handbook is intended to help students and parents better understand and navigate their school environment. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to call at (603)-868-2820 or e-mail Bill Sullivan, Principal at bsullivan@orcsd.org or Alida Carter, Assistant Principal at acarter@orcsd.org.

NOTE TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS:

Students and their parents/guardians are responsible for reading and following the rules in this handbook. This handbook has been developed within the framework of the policies of the Oyster River School Board. In case of a conflict between a Board policy and the rules in this handbook, the policy will prevail. The school reserves the unlimited right to make changes to the handbook at any time without prior notice. The handbook is provided solely for the convenience of staff, students, and parents, and to the extent permissible by law, the school expressly disclaims any liability which may otherwise be incurred.

A copy of the Board's Policy Manual is available in each school office and is also available on the District website at <http://www.orcsd.org>

ORMS MISSION AND HABITS OF LEARNING

The ORMS mission is to provide a creative and developmentally appropriate learning environment recognizing the educational, social, and emotional needs of every learner. Our goal is that every learner will develop skills needed to become a responsible lifelong learner who is able to serve the school, community, and/or the world.

ORMS Habits of Learning

Bobcats are.... Respectful, Responsible, Engaged, and have a Growth mindset.

EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Oyster River Cooperative School District is committed to the concept and implementation of equal educational opportunities as required by federal and state laws for all students, regardless of sex, race, creed, color, marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, or physical or mental disability. See Board [Policy AC](#).

Title IX contact: Catherine Plourde cplourde@orcsd.org

Students and/or parents should address any questions or concerns to **Dr. James Morse, Superintendent of SAU #5**. The phone number is 868-5100 or email at jmorse@orcsd.org

ABSENCES AND DISMISSALS

If you are absent, please have a parent or guardian call the school. When calling to report an absence please leave your name, student's grade, their class, and a brief message explaining the reason. If the office does not receive a call regarding your absence, we will attempt to contact a parent either at home or at work. Students who are not in school cannot attend after-school activities. Please contact the administration should you have extenuating circumstances.

If a student is being dismissed, the student should bring a note signed by a parent to the office at the beginning of the school day and receive a dismissal slip from the office staff. This slip is shown to the classroom teacher at time of dismissal and the student should come to the office to sign out. If a student is returning to school after a dismissal, please check in with the office and receive a pass to class. When you arrive at ORMS to pick up your student you should call the front office to let the office know you are here. To contact the front office, you can call 603-868-2820 or e-mail Laurie Gaylord at lgaylord@orcsd.org or Denise Diharce at ddiharce@orcsd.org

EXTENDED ABSENCE PROCEDURE

Families going on vacation while school is in session must notify the principal and all teachers in writing three weeks in advance. Prior to the absence, teachers will provide a calculation of the student's current average with a brief synopsis of topics to be covered in class during the student's absence. It will be the responsibility of the parents and the student to keep the student current in curricular topics presented in the school during a discretionary absence. The student will not be held accountable for specific assignments missed during the absence period but will be responsible for subsequent assignments AND for all tests and quizzes relevant to the schoolwork completed by the student's class. Work will not be sent on vacation with the student. Teachers are not required to design a separate program and will not be able to recreate classroom activities for students who are absent for reasons other than illness, emergency, or religious observance.

ARRIVAL TIME/TARDINESS/DROP-OFF PROCEDURES

Students can be dropped off at the front entrance of the building starting at 7:50 am. Walkers are also expected to wait at the front entrance. Breakfast will be served in the Learning Commons from 7:50 am until 8:10 am. All students must be in the building seated ready to learn when school starts at 8:15 am. **Students arriving after 8:15 am will be marked tardy.**

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSINGS OR DELAYS

If school is delayed or cancelled, several radio stations will be notified. Please listen to WTSN (1270 AM), WOKQ (97.5 FM), WHEB (100.3FM) or WERZ (107.1 FM). Information about cancellations or delays will also be posted at www.orcsd.org. In addition, an e-mail message will be sent using Parent Square. Please contact the middle school office if you are not receiving Parent Square messages. If no announcement is made, school will be in normal session. On days when school is cancelled, evening activities for that day are automatically cancelled as well.

OYSTER RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL LIBRARY

HOURS: 7:50AM TO 3:15PM

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Library resources include print and digital collections.

The digital resources often require users to access them ClassLink or to have log-on information which is available through the library website.

Resources found in the library may be borrowed as follows:

BOOKS - 3 weeks (Renewals are possible as long as the item is not on reserve).

AV EQUIPMENT - start with your teacher to arrange use for classroom needs.

Please discuss damaged or lost items with Mr. Bellows. nbellows@orcsd.org

DESTINY LIBRARY CATALOG

The Destiny catalog is an online system used throughout the school district to identify and access resources at all OR libraries. Grade 5 and new ORMS students are provided a Destiny account and instruction to personalize use of this account.

STUDENT RECORDS

The Oyster River Cooperative School District complies with all federal and state laws concerning confidentiality of student records (see Board [Policy JO](#)). A notice is sent home with students at the beginning of the year about parent and student rights concerning student records. If you need more information, please contact the Principal or your child's Guidance Counselor.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Special education services are available for all students who qualify. If you have questions about whether your child may be eligible for such services, please contact your child's teacher or the Assistant Director of Student Services, Melissa Jean. She can be reached at 868-2820 or via e-mail at mjean@orcscd.org

COUNSELING SERVICES

Rheanna Cote 6th grade rcote@orcscd.org
sgahm@orcscd.org

Sarah Gahm 8th grade

Kim Felch 7th grade kfelch@orcscd.org
skadden@orcscd.org

Stephanie Kadden 5th grade

LAPTOPS AND OTHER SCHOOL PROPERTY

Students are responsible for proper care and return of laptop computers, any textbooks and other school properties issued to them for their use and are liable for the repair or replacement cost of items issued to them that are damaged or lost (see Board [Policy JFCB](#)).

VALUABLES

Please do not bring valuable items or large sums of money to school. If you must do so, please ask one of your teachers or office staff to secure your property during the day. The school assumes no responsibility for lost or stolen items.

PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Students are not allowed to use personal electronic devices from the start of school until the end of school (8:00am-3:00pm). See school board policy [JICJ \(A\)](#)

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical activity is important to a healthy body and mind. Physical education is a required activity at ORMS that occurs for one quarter of the year for every student. If you need to be excused from physical education for more than two consecutive classes, you will need to show a doctor's note to your teacher. Athletic footwear (sneakers) must always be worn in the gym. Students wearing shoes that are not appropriate for the gym will be asked to sit out gym class for the day.

CODE OF CONDUCT

As stated in our ORCSD Vision, students, teachers, and community members take pride in our schools and understand that each of us has a role to play in ensuring their success. We create safe, stimulating learning environments where all students are challenged and excited by the opportunities to learn; where students and teachers alike feel it is safe to take creative risks; and where every member of our community is known and valued.

ORMS embraces restorative practices to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as develop social connections within our school community. These relationships and connections create a safe and stimulating environment for all. Utilizing restorative practices help to create a trusting respectful environment by giving both students and adults an opportunity to make positive choices, repair and restore relationships, and interact respectfully in the classroom and throughout the school.

Restorative practices are a continuum which offers an equitable, inclusive, and respectful alternative for addressing disciplinary infractions as compared with traditional school approaches. A restorative practices approach focuses on changing behavior(s) and building a positive school culture and climate. It also offers a proactive strategy to create a connected responsible school community where all members feel valued, safe, and can thrive. The Code of Conduct at ORMS will include restorative practices while staying in compliance with NH State Laws and School Board policies.

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

Below is a list of behavior examples, school procedures, and possible school support and intervention responses. Please note this list is not exhaustive and ORMS school administration reserves the right to use its discretion in addressing disciplinary incidents.

| Student Behavior Examples | Examples of School Procedures | School Support & Intervention Strategy Samples |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Abusive language</p> <p>Cheating and lying</p> <p>Classroom disturbance</p> <p>Classroom tardiness</p> <p>Cuts/Truancy/ Unexcused absences</p> <p>Defiant failure to carry out a staff member's reasonable instruction</p> <p>Disrespectful behavior toward others or school property</p> <p>Failure to follow the rules of the school</p> <p>Harassment/Sexual Harassment</p> <p>Improper behavior in hallways</p> <p>Refusal to identify oneself</p> | <p>The student is referred to the administrator</p> <p>An opportunity is provided for the student's due process; to voice their side of the incident.</p> <p>Administrator determines the support or intervention strategy needed.</p> <p>A proper and accurate record of the offenses and action steps is maintained by the administrator.</p> <p>Parental contact may be made.</p> | <p>Community service</p> <p>Counseling</p> <p>Detention</p> <p>Instruction in conflict resolution, and/or anger management</p> <p>Parent conference</p> <p>Peer mediation</p> <p>Rearrange class schedules</p> <p>Restorative conference focuses on righting the wrong</p> <p>Restriction from extra-curricular activities</p> <p>Temporary removal from class or activity (i.e. ISS)</p> <p>Other restorative practices</p> |

Discipline Procedures (Health and Safety)

| Student Behavior Examples | Examples of School Procedures | School Support & Intervention Strategy Samples |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Arson</p> <p>Assault/Battery</p> <p>Bomb threat</p> <p>Bullying</p> <p>Harassment/Sexual Harassment</p> <p>Possession/use of prohibited substances including alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and/or vaping</p> <p>Possession/use of fireworks</p> <p>Possession/use/transfer of dangerous weapons</p> <p>Threats to others</p> | <p>The student is referred to the administrator</p> <p>An opportunity is provided for the student’s due process; to voice their side of the incident.</p> <p>Administrator determines the support or intervention strategy needed</p> <p>A proper and accurate record of the offenses and action steps is maintained by the administrator.</p> <p>Parental contact will be made.</p> | <p>Community service</p> <p>Counseling</p> <p>Expulsion</p> <p>Instruction in conflict resolution, and/or anger management</p> <p>Parent conference</p> <p>Out of school suspension</p> <p>Rearrange class schedules</p> <p>Restorative conference focuses on righting the wrong</p> <p>Restriction from extra-curricular activities</p> <p>Temporary removal from class or activity (i.e. ISS)</p> <p>Other restorative practices</p> |

PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING

A student commits plagiarism if he/she uses ideas from another person and does not properly cite the source. A paper containing improperly borrowed ideas which are presented as original thinking is dishonest. A paper that is written by Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not considered your own original work. Whether the unnoticed borrowing is intentional or due to sloppy workmanship, it is considered plagiarism. Plagiarism includes:

1. Word for word lifting of information from a source
2. Paraphrasing information which is not common knowledge
3. Using another person's original idea but developing it with details, examples, and facts
4. Borrowing from another student or teacher with whom the assignment was discussed
5. Using any form of AI to write your paper

Students are not to use AI or ChatGPT for any assignments unless a teacher has directly stated that they can.

The consequences for plagiarism are up to the discretion of the teacher. Plagiarism can result in no credit for the assignment and, depending upon the circumstances, may cause a student to fail the class even for a first offense. ORMS embraces restorative practices as referenced in the Code of Conduct section. Restorative practices will be utilized on a continuum to assist students with changing behavior.

SMOKING, TOBACCO, DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

The Board has adopted a policy prohibiting smoking and the use of tobacco products on school property or at school-sponsored events, as well as consuming, possessing, furnishing, selling, receiving, buying, manufacturing or being under the influence of drugs, alcohol and other prohibited substances (see [Policy JICH](#)). ORMS embraces restorative practices as referenced in the Code of Conduct section. Restorative practices will be utilized on a continuum to assist students with changing behavior.

WEAPONS, THREATS AND VIOLENCE

The Board believes that students and staff are entitled to learn and work in a school environment free of weapons, violence, threats (including bomb threats), and other disruptive and illegal behavior. Students are expected to conduct themselves with respect for others and in accordance with Board policies, school rules, reasonable unwritten behavior expectations and applicable state and federal laws. ORMS embraces restorative practices as referenced in the Code of Conduct section. Restorative practices will be utilized on a continuum to assist students with changing behavior. Please see Board [Policy JICI](#) - Weapons on School Property

HARRASSMENT/SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

Harassment of students because of sex, race, creed, color, marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, or physical or mental disability is prohibited and may constitute illegal discrimination under state and federal laws. Any student who believes he/she may have been harassed is encouraged to discuss the matter with the building principal and may file a complaint which will be investigated. ORMS embraces restorative practices as referenced in the Code of Conduct section. Restorative practices will be utilized on a continuum to assist students with changing behavior. See Board [Policy ACAA](#) - Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students and [ACAA-R](#) - Student Discrimination and Harassment Complaint

BULLYING AND CYBER-BULLYING

The Oyster River School Board has adopted a Bullying, Cyber-Bullying, and Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention policy ([Policy JICK](#))

“Bullying” is a single significant incident or a pattern of incidents involving a written, verbal, or electronic communication, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at another student which:

- (a) physically harms a student or damages the student’s property.
- (b) causes emotional distress to a student. For the purposes of this policy, the term “emotional distress” means distress that impairs the student’s participation in academic or other school-sponsored activities. The term “emotional distress” does not include the unpleasantness or discomfort that accompanies an unpopular viewpoint.
- (c) interferes with a student’s educational opportunities.
- (d) creates a hostile educational environment; or
- (e) substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the school.

“Bullying” includes actions motivated by an imbalance of power based on a student’s actual or perceived personal characteristics, behaviors, or beliefs, or motivated by the student’s association with another person and based on the other person’s characteristics, behaviors, or beliefs.

“Cyberbullying” is any conduct defined in paragraph 1 of this Section undertaken through the use of electronic devices which include, but are not limited to, telephones, cellular phones, computers, pagers, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging, and websites. Cyberbullying includes, but is not limited to, the following actions: harassing, teasing, intimidation, threatening, stalking or terrorizing another person by sending or posting inappropriate and hurtful e-mail messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or web site postings, including blogs or other use of technology.

Any student who believes he/she has been a victim of bullying should report it to the building principal. ORMS embraces restorative practices as referenced in the Code of Conduct section. Restorative practices will be utilized on a continuum to assist students with changing behavior.

ORMS DRESS CODE

Student clothing should not distract from the educational process or make others feel uncomfortable. Rude or offensive messages on clothing or other items is unacceptable. This includes but is not limited to references to drugs, alcohol, tobacco, sexual activity, or illegal acts. All undergarments must be covered. Loose or baggy pants and shorts need to be belted so undergarments are not exposed. Shirts which reveal the chest, undergarments, or abdomen are not acceptable. During the winter months and any other extreme weather conditions, the school reserves the right to require students to wear coats outside for any activity. Sunglasses and hoods are not to be worn inside the building unless there is a diagnosed medical reason. The school administration has the authority to prohibit other logos, pictures, or messages which they determine to be in violation of the Board's nondiscrimination or harassment policies, or disruptive to the school's learning environment.

COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE

The Oyster River School Board has adopted a comprehensive policy and rules concerning the use of school computers and the Internet (see [Policy JICL](#)). Students are always required to follow the policy and school rules and have no expectation of privacy in their use of school computers. Students who violate the policy and rules are liable to disciplinary action and suspension of computer privileges. The policy and rules are provided to students and discussed in class each year.

SCHOOL LOCKERS AND STORAGE FACILITIES

The use of lockers, desks and other school storage facilities is a privilege granted to students. All storage facilities are school property and remain under the control, custody, and supervision of the school. Students have no expectation of privacy in school storage facilities or for any items placed in such facilities. School officials have the authority to inspect and search storage facilities and their contents on a random basis, with or without reasonable suspicion, and without notice or consent. Please see [Board policy JIH](#).

SCHOOL LUNCH AND BREAKFAST PROGRAMS

"The Bobcat Café"

Breakfast and lunch are available for purchase by all students. Breakfast begins at 7:50 am. Students may purchase a la carte items like chips, desserts, or drinks if they have money in their account. Lunches are scheduled by grade. The [monthly menu](#) is posted on the website. Applications for free or reduced lunch can be found on the district website under Child Nutrition.

All students are assigned PIN numbers for their personal accounts. In the case that students do not have sufficient funds, they will NOT be allowed to buy anything from the café but can call home to let parents know their account is empty and may borrow money from the office for lunch. All money borrowed is expected to be returned the next school day.

Parents can manage their child's lunch account on-line. Instructions for how to set up and manage an online lunch account can be found at the school district website www.orcsd.org.

Expectations for behavior in the cafeteria are consistent with school-wide expectations. Students are responsible for cleaning their personal table and floor space.

SNACK POLICY

Each team will establish a time when students can eat snack.

NURSE'S OFFICE

The school nurse is available to all students who are ill or hurt. The school nurse will call home should a student need to be dismissed due to illness. **We ask that students do NOT call/text home prior to visiting the nurse.**

MEDICATION

All medication brought to school must be kept in the nurse's office, labeled with the student's name, and accompanied by a signed parental request. This includes over the counter medications such as aspirin, Tylenol, or decongestants. The Board has adopted a comprehensive policy and procedure concerning the administration of medications at school. Parents may request that medications be administered at school in accordance with the established policy and procedure. Students may not carry or self-administer medications except as permitted by Board policy (see [Policy JLCD](#)). Students shall not share any prescription or over-the-counter medication with another student ([see policy JLCD](#)). Questions should be directed to the School Nurse.

EMERGENCY DRILLS

During the year, there will be scheduled and spontaneous drills. When the alarm sounds, follow your teacher's directions for departure from the room. No talking is allowed during a drill. All students should exit in single file lines. Directions for exits are posted in each classroom.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

BUS CONDUCT

The Board has adopted a policy concerning bus conduct (see [Policy JICC](#)). Students who misbehave on the bus are subject to suspension of their bus privileges. Parents and students should be aware that District school buses may be equipped with electronic surveillance devices (see Board [Policy ECAF](#)).

BUS PERMISSION

Students need written permission from their parent or guardian to ride a bus to a friend's home.

HOME/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

It is our goal as a school to be as paperless as possible. For this reason, we try to put all relevant information, like this handbook, on our school website at www.orcsd.org/orms/. We ask all students and parents to bookmark the school website and check it regularly. Academic teams will post homework and important announcements on their team Schoology page. The ORMS website will provide an accurate calendar of up-coming school-wide events. Each team, with parent/guardian cooperation, will keep an e-mail list that will be used for team information and announcements.

VISITORS

For school security reasons all adult visitors must ring the bell outside the front doors. Someone from the office will unlock the doors and then all visitors must stop at the main office and sign in before proceeding with any business in the school. The main office is located to the right as you walk through the front doors. All visitors are required to wear a white identification sticker to show that they have checked in at the office.

MESSAGES

Any messages for students will be delivered prior to 2:50 p.m. each day. Messages needing immediate attention should be requested in emergencies only. We ask parents and students to make plans before school begins each day to minimize the need for messages.

FIELD TRIPS

When appropriate, field trips are scheduled during the year to enhance classroom instruction. Parents will receive an information letter explaining the intent and cost of the trip and requesting permission for students to participate. Parents are often invited to chaperone trips. This help is greatly appreciated. Students may be excluded from trips for discipline or safety reasons. Families will be contacted in a timely fashion in these cases.

Occasionally, all ORMS students and staff are expected to participate in a whole school field trip. Trips like this are designed to create community within our school as well as support the community in which we live. These opportunities are in line with our Oyster River Cooperative School District Vision statement.

LOST AND FOUND

The ORMS "lost and found" is located inside the Learning Commons. Due to storage issues, lost items will only be stored there temporarily. At various times throughout the year, it is announced that the "lost and found" items will be donated to charity if not claimed. It is the individual student's responsibility to check for personal items. Please label your possessions so they may be returned more effectively.

MEDIA INFORMATION

On occasion, the District allows media outlets such as local newspapers, radio stations and television stations to visit the school to report on school programs and activities. The District may also feature students, or their photographs, voices or work for promotional and educational reasons on the District web site, cable TV, publications, or school/community events. Media/Directory Release Forms must be filled out at the beginning of every school year as part of the registration process on PowerSchool. Please note that releases are not required for public events. If you need further information, please contact the building principal.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

At ORMS we offer a wide range of extra and co-curricular activities. For a student to be eligible to participate in these activities they must be in good academic standing and meet ORMS behavior expectations. **Students who are not in school cannot attend after-school activities.**

For more information on extracurricular activities at ORMS please visit our school website at www.orcsd.org/orms/.

ORCSD POLICIES

All ORCSD policies can be found on the ORCSD web page in the School Board section or by clicking [here](#)