



O'CONNELL COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

1320 TREMONT
GALVESTON, TEXAS 77550

2023-2024
ATHLETIC HANDBOOK

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This handbook is intended to acquaint the parents and students of O’Connell College Prep with the school’s current policies and practices. OCPS policies may be changed from time to time, as the school, in its sole discretion, may elect. Furthermore, such policies shall be considered in light of the overall policies and proceedings established for the school’s students. The policies expressed herein, as they may be amended from time to time, shall supersede and have control over any previously published guidelines and/or policies.

The Athletic Handbook is provided as an addendum to the Student Handbook. Nothing in the Athletic Handbook should alter or negate any statement found in the Student Handbook.

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OCPS ATHLETIC POLICIES

Philosophy

Our goal is to train and develop students' minds, hearts, souls, and bodies. We are fulfilling that goal by training students to live responsible and successful lives based on Christian values. OCPS believes quality education includes the opportunity to participate in athletic programs. The athletic program is a voluntary privilege that requires an investment of considerable time outside the school day. Students are expected to represent OCPS as a part of the Christian community with exemplary behavior wherever they go (Philippians 1:27). It is vital that each student involved with the athletic program realizes that no matter how formidable the opposition, the team competes to win. Every athlete should strive to be first (1 Corinthians 9:24). However, the student must know there is no shame or disgrace to the team that plays its best and is behind at the end of the contest. Winning is not the guiding principle. It is how well the team or individual competes and how they compete.

The strength of athletics lies in its ability to develop character traits such as cooperation, determination, perseverance, self-control, discipline of emotion, sportsmanship, humility, commitment, and maturity. These traits are fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22). Therefore, athletics is valuable to the Christian community and the Christian school. OCPS is committed to training and developing our students for Christian service and leadership. Athletics is not the whole answer to character development at our school; it is but one building block of many designed for Christian character development of the student at OCPS.

O'Connell Athlete Code of Conduct

We know that competition raises the level of our intensity and that the desire to win is important. However, the desire to win can never become so important that we lose our Christian witness. Everyone is watching to see how those involved in the Christian school conducts themselves. Therefore, we will teach our athletes to be accountable for their conduct. It is never acceptable to be rude to those we compete against. Respect will be taught and demonstrated regardless of the outcome of the game.

We realize that officiating a game is a difficult responsibility. Coaching is not always an easy job either. Not all decisions made by officials and/or coaches will be understood or will they always be right. But we expect our players to submit to authority in a proper way. School spirit is never to be an excuse for unruly and rude treatment of other fans, coaches, officials, or opposing players.

Academic Eligibility

Each student participating in the athletic program will be required to meet certain minimum standards in the area of academics.

6-12-18 RULE: students must accumulate a minimum of six (6) credits to be eligible to participate in extra-curricular activities for the first nine-week reporting period in the fall.

Ninth Grade: Promoted to 9th grade from the 8th grade.

Tenth Grade: Accumulated a minimum of 6 credits during the previous school year.

Eleventh Grade: Accumulate a minimum of 6 credits during the previous school year or 12 credits total for the two previous years.

Twelfth Grade: Accumulated a minimum of 6 credits during the previous school year or 18 credits total for the three previous years.

Eligibility to participate in extra-curricular activities will be determined using the “No Pass/No Play” policy outlined below. This policy is based on TAPPS policy regarding eligibility for participation.

- All students are eligible to participate during the first nine weeks.
- After the first nine weeks grading period, students who **fail any class (69 or below) will be ineligible.**
- The non-participation period will begin on the first school day following the end of the nine-weeks grading period.
- Students are expected to continue practicing with the team during periods of ineligibility, but may not dress out for games, or travel with the team to out-of-town contests. However, they may sit on the bench during home contests, but may not be in uniform.
- All students are eligible to participate in games during the Christmas break.
- A student may regain eligibility at the time grades are checked, provided the student is passing **all classes** at that time. If eligibility is regained, he/she retains eligibility for the remainder of the nine-weeks grading period beginning on the first school day following the ineligibility period.
- Honors, AP, and Dual Credit classes are exempt from the first failing grade if the grade in the advanced class is 60 or above. After the initial waiver for the first failing Honors, AP, or Dual Credit class, the minimum grade of 70 applies to all classes.
- Should an athlete (who is eligible) receive a report of being behind in a class (or classes), coaches will have the authority to not allow that player to travel to road games until the missing work has been completed, if travel requires them to miss class. It is hard to justify a player missing class for a game if they are not caught up on classwork.

Students who are assigned ISS or OSS will be ineligible to participate in any contest or practices for the days they are serving the placement.

Absence Guidelines for Extracurricular Activities

To be eligible to play in a game or participate in practice, a student must be at school for two full class periods during the school day of the game or practice in question (Mondays through Thursdays). On Fridays, the student must be present the entire school day to be allowed to participate. If a student leaves school during the day due to illness and does not return to school, they may not return to attend practices or participate in games taking place that day. The principal may excuse students with extenuating circumstances from the policy (doctor appointments may require a physician's note).

- It is the student-athlete's responsibility to notify his/her coach or athletic director of an event that is preventing him/her from being in school by the expected time.
- Student-athletes are expected to have all missed assignments completed on the day of return to class, and to meet with their teachers to discuss the expectations for turning in any missed assignments.
- Coaches reserve the right to withhold a student from competition and/or practices should that student fail to turn in late assignments by the expected due date.

Athletic Fees

All student athletes at OCPS are required to pay an athletic fee for each sport. The fee is due before the first game has been played. After the due date has passed, a student athlete will not be allowed to participate in practices or games until the fee has been paid. If a player quits a sport after the first game has been played, the sports fees are not refundable. If player becomes academically ineligible, or is suspended from a team, fees are also not refundable. *(See list of athletic sports fees on page 14).*

Athletic Participation Forms & Physicals / Rank One Online Profiles

A student must have the required Athletic Participation Forms and Physical (filled out completely and signed) on file with the Athletic Office before clearance is given to participate in any school sport. **PRE-PARTICIPATION PHYSICALS/MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS ARE REQUIRED YEARLY PRIOR TO ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION (State Law). This includes practices & games.** Also, all consent forms must be completed every year.

Athletic consent forms are available on the Rank One system and can be filled out online.

Student Profile Pages and Student Signature Pages must also be completed through **the Rank One online system**. Instructions will be provided on how to set up your child's account to complete this. No student will be allowed to participate until this requirement has been met.

Team Rules of Conduct

The student who chooses to participate in the athletic program is in a unique position. This position will be observed by many public & private schools, media, parents, guests, peers, teachers, and the public at large. It is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate one's desire to be Christ-like in sportsmanship and performance.

Each coach is responsible for the conduct of the members of his/her teams. The coach shall provide a set of rules explaining conduct and penalties for both minor and major infraction of the rules in the following areas:

- A participant in any sport is required to be neat, clean, well groomed, and in proper attire for games and practice (shirt, shorts, socks, shoes, etc). No jewelry is to be worn during practice or games.
- The dressing rooms and all team areas will be kept clean. Athletes are expected to maintain a clean positive environment, as dressing areas may also be utilized by visiting teams
- A participant will exhibit a Christian lifestyle and represent the school in a Christ-like manner at all times. Failure to commit to this lifestyle may result in the forfeiture of the opportunity to participate in the athletic program. This includes, but not limited to:
 - A participant will not steal or use another's property without permission of the owner
 - A participant must abstain from the use of alcohol, tobacco products, and abuse of drugs
 - A participant will not use obscene, vulgar, or any non-Christian language
- A participant must be ready to show effort, cooperation, respect, and support for coaches and other team members.
- A participant on academic or conduct probation may be removed from the team.
- **A participant is required to attend all scheduled practices, meetings and contests whether or not school is in session.** If it is necessary to miss any meeting, practice or game, prior arrangements must be made with the coach. Participants may be dismissed from the team after any unexcused absences. Unexcused absences are those in which the coach was not properly notified. Injured athletes who are able to attend school are expected to attend practice sessions. Any non-emergency absences from games or practice will be considered unexcused. An unexcused absence prior to a game could render that athlete ineligible for the game or see a reduction in playing time or be dismissed from the team. Excused absences **may** still result in a reduction in playing time due to not being able to attend practice prior to a game(s) (coach's discretion).
- For excused absences from classes due to sports, it is the student's responsibility to check with the teacher prior to the absence for the assignments.

- A participant will know the procedures for being “cut” from the team if cuts are to be made.
- All equipment must be turned in from a previous sport to begin practice in the second sport unless the participant is involved in overlapping sports.
- Participants must complete the entire season to be eligible for awards and honors.
- Participants are expected to commit for the entire season’s program in the sport(s) they select, including tournaments and playoffs. The athletic season will run from the first scheduled school workout until the Monday after the last contest. In addition, an athlete must complete the entire season in their current sport before being allowed to join and compete on a team in a subsequent sport. They will not be allowed to quit one sport to be able to begin another sport.
- In the event an athlete is ejected from any contest, proper disciplinary action (determined by the coach) will be taken. The athlete also is responsible for any fines associated with the ejection in question.
- In the event a student athlete decides to quit a sport after the first game has been played or is dismissed from a team for disciplinary reasons or violation of team rules, they will not be allowed to participate in another sport until the sport they quit is completely finished, regardless of if the sports overlap or not. In addition, the athlete must sit out 3 regular season games of the next sport of their choice. Exceptions to this rule may include leaving a sport for injury or medical reasons, or personal/family issues. The coach of the sport in question or Athletic Director may also excuse the athlete from this rule if special circumstances have been discussed between the coach and athlete.

In addition, the participants may be required to adhere to any other rules and requirements adopted and enforced by the coach and approved by the Athletic Director and/or Principal.

In case of minor or major infractions of the above stated rules, the coach of the sport may place the athlete on probation or suspension until the matter is resolved. After a coach has met with the athlete at least one time to explain the disciplinary action, and the requirement is understood by the athlete, the matter will be considered resolved. This meeting may involve parents unless exclusion from the sport is the penalty, in which case the parents **must be** involved. The coach will be responsible for notifying the Athletic Director of any intention to exclude or suspend a student from a sport prior to the meeting with the student athlete and his/her parents.

Chain of Command

If a situation arises that requires a parent discussion, that parent needs to follow the chain of command and see the coach first, followed by the Athletic Director. The Athletic Director will not meet with any parent regarding issues that have not first been discussed with the coach.

Playing time is at the discretion of the coach. The Athletic Director will not meet with parents regarding playing time.

Any consequence for direct violation of the OCPS Student Handbook is at the discretion of the coach with approval from the Athletic Director. Possible sanctions may include but are not limited to immediate removal from a team, suspension from a team, game suspensions, or other sanctions as determined by coach and approved by Athletic Director. School Administrators will also follow up with any additional sanctions if deemed necessary as outlined by the Student Handbook.

Tryouts & Team Selection

All students are given an equal opportunity to make a team. The individual coach, under the supervision of the Athletic Director, will determine the length and format of the tryouts. If cutting is necessary in team selection, several areas should be considered such as skill level, attitude, work ethic, playing ability, grades, personality and character qualities. OCPS athletes are discouraged from participating in non-school sports teams while competing for the school. If an athlete does compete for the non-school team while competing for a school team, the athlete must put the school team as priority in the case of a conflict.

Team Practices

Practices are a vital part of any team's success. Therefore, attendance at practices is NOT an option at any level. It is mandatory that students be at all scheduled practices unless there is a valid reason to be excused (at the coach's discretion). All practices are closed to parents and non-team personnel, unless previous approval by the head coach is given. Practices are considered valuable instructional and evaluation time, and require the full concentration of the players and coaching staff.

- Any practice or game missed for unexcused reasons will result in penalty or disciplinary action at the discretion of the coach.
- The coach must be notified as soon as it is known that the student is going to miss a practice or game. If this is something that is known at ahead of time, the coach should be notified at that time.
- Missing practices or games will result in loss of playing time, or being held out of games as the coach sees fit.
- Continuous unexcused absences could result in being removed from the team.

- If a player is injured, he/she is still required to attend practice (if physically able) and help the team in other capacities. This is important in keeping up with instruction.

Team Travel

All student-athletes are required to travel to all road contests in transportation provided by or arranged by the school. Boys & girls will not sit together in instances when teams from each gender must travel in shared transportation. In the event of personal or family inconvenience, other arrangements may be made with the coach. A permission slip must be signed by a parent and returned to the coach.

- Athletes traveling to and from games will dress in attire designated by the coach and in keeping with the O'Connell student handbook and dress codes.
- The driver of the team vehicle is the ultimate authority, and all students must adhere to his/her instructions.
- No non-team members are allowed to ride in any school provided vehicles.
- No team member may ride to, or from a contest with another student.
- Athletes may leave a road game with a parent, or an adult (over age 18) designated by the parent. In the event an athlete is to ride home with an adult other than the parent, written notification must be provided to the coach or Athletic Director prior to the game.
- The parent or guardian must sign out the student-athlete with the coach prior to leaving any road contest.
- Any student-athlete not signed out by a parent/guardian will be transported back to the school.
- In the event a team returns to school after midnight from a road game (on a school night), team members must report to school by 9:00 am the following morning.
- **For the 2023-24 school year (or until further notice is given from school administration), if a parent prefers to transport their own child to a road game due to the current situation with COVID-19, they may do so.** Proper notification must be given to the head coach, and the athlete must follow team rules set for departure (i.e. The player must depart at the same time that has been set for the team by the coach). **THE PLAYER MAY NOT DRIVE HIMSELF/HERSELF.** However, allowances may be made for special circumstances, and will require approval from the principal and the athletic director.

School vehicles will be left clean after each use.

The drivers of the vehicle are the ultimate authority, and all students must submit to his/her instructions. If more than 15 student athletes are traveling by bus, a second coach will travel on the bus with the team., when possible. Any student who does not comply with the above-mentioned travel rules will forfeit his/her right to travel with the team.

Overnight Travel

All school/athletic rules are in effect during overnight travel. Athletes are expected to conduct themselves in a Christ like manner at all events. No player will be allowed to leave the group except when staying at a hotel that provides a variety of facilities within its complex. Any direct violation of the OCPS Handbook is at the discretion of the Coach and Athletic Director on overnight travels. Any violations could result in sanctions including (but not limited to) removal from a team, game suspensions, parents called to pick up the athlete from the trip, or other sanctions as determined by the coach and Athletic Director. School discipline will also follow once the athlete has returned to school, as outlined by the school handbook. When hotel stays are required, the total hotel cost will be divided between the players who are travelling.

DRUG & ALCOHOL POLICY

The use of DRUGS, INCLUDING ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO, is strictly prohibited on campus as well as at any school sponsored or extracurricular activity/event. This prohibition includes any time a student or his/her parent is representing O'Connell College Preparatory School. Students engaging in the possession, sale, being under the influence of or use of drugs or alcohol or any controlled substance are also subject to established Archdiocesan policies regarding substance abuse, (policy #3360):

"The use of illicit drugs and the unlawful possession and use of alcohol is wrong and harmful. A student is subject to removal from class that may result in suspension, expulsion, or referral to prosecution if, while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property, there is a question of:

* Chemical substance use, possession for consumption, sale or dispensing of illegal drugs and narcotics, (hard or soft drugs, alcohol, inhalants, marijuana or controlled substance).

* Acting under the influence of an illegal drug-alcohol, narcotic, marijuana, or controlled substance; Medication misuse or overdose. The school nurse, the counselor, and the principal should work together with the student and family toward bringing about a completed recovery and elimination of the drug abuse for the student involved."

* Drug dogs will be used as needed throughout the year.

* Possession of vapes, using nicotine or illegal substances, is prohibited and will result in suspension or expulsion. Possession of tobacco products will also result in suspension or expulsion. Possession of these substances is prohibited by law on school campuses.

* Regarding sports and extra-curricular activities, additional consequences or game suspensions may be administered at the discretion of the Athletic Director and/or Dean of Students.

RANDOM DRUG/ALCOHOL TESTING POLICY

O'Connell College Preparatory School has a random drug-testing program through which all students are eligible to be randomly selected for testing. Any student having a positive test would immediately fall under the strictures of the O'Connell College Preparatory School drug policy. Enrollment at O'Connell constitutes acceptance of this policy.

* Contesting a Positive Result: If a parent wishes to contest the result, the parent may request a retest at the expense of the parent. The repeat test shall be done by the same lab and collected in the same manner as the initial test.

* Breathalyzer Test: A sobriety test may be used to determine if a student has consumed alcohol. This test may be administered on campus or at school-sponsored events as students enter, participate in, or leave the event.

* Student Searches: The school is co-tenant of lockers and desks and reserves the right to conduct searches or inspections of personal effects, lockers, baggage, vehicles, and /or any other student property for the purpose of determining if any individual on the premises of OCPS is in possession of any illegal or unauthorized items. These searches may be conducted from time-to-time without prior announcement. School officials reserve the right to use drug sniffing dogs with or without reasonable suspicion.

Transition Between Sports

A large number of our athletes play multiple sports that run in back-to-back seasons. As a small, private school, all coaches must work together to help each sport be as successful as possible. In order to help our students prepare for each sport, we will follow the following policy to help transition those athletes from the end of one sport to the start of the next (ex: football/volleyball to basketball/soccer):

- An athlete is allowed to practice with the team in the new sport that is beginning, provided they do not miss any activities of the current sport. While the current sport is in session, it will not be mandatory for an athlete to attend the upcoming sport's practice, but is allowed and suggested.
- While currently involved in a sport, an athlete is allowed to participate in a game with the succeeding sport, provided this has been discussed between the coaches of each sport.

Uniforms/Equipment & Player Expense

School-owned equipment checked out by a student-athlete is his/her responsibility. The student will be held financial responsible for any lost, misplaced, or damaged equipment. The cost of any deliberate destruction of school property will be charged to the athlete. Athletes will not be allowed to continue in or begin a new season until all financial obligations have been cleared. The student is also subject to not receiving report cards or being denied academic records until the obligation has been met. Current replacement costs will determine the amount for which the athlete will be held accountable. Participants will also not be allowed to continue competition or receive awards until that obligation is fulfilled.

The athletic department supplies the players' game uniforms. Depending on the sport, athletes may be responsible for purchasing a practice uniform. Participants may be expected to furnish their own shoes, socks, and other needed items for the sport in which they are competing. The athletic department may provide player pack criteria for these items above. Additional personal expenses may be incurred while the team is traveling (i.e. eating, lodging, etc.).

Fundraisers

All student athletes are expected and required to participate in planned athletic fundraisers. Money from fundraisers go towards providing athletics with necessary equipment for each program, and athletes are expected to do their fair share as a participant in the program.

Requirements for Athletic Awards and Lettering in a Varsity Sport

- Athletes must complete one full season of a varsity sport in good standing in order to receive consideration for a letter.
- An athlete may not order a letter jacket until they have completed an entire season as a member of a varsity team.
- Attendance, attitude, sportsmanship, and effort will also be considered in receiving a letter.

In the event a player cannot continue participation in a sport due to injury, he or she will be entitled to an award upon the recommendation of the coach.

Parent Code of Conduct & Expectations

Parents are a vital part of all of the activities at O'Connell College Preparatory School. There are certain guidelines that we expect parents to follow. We would like to see as many parents, relatives, and friends at all games, home and away. You will never know how much this support means to your child.

The decision of your son or daughter to participate in the athletic program requires a family commitment. At the same time, the decision to allow your son or daughter to participate in competitive athletics is a decision to encounter a special set of stresses and should involve a decision on how to handle those stresses in an appropriate Christian way. Prior to participation an athlete must consider the cost and determine if he/she is willing to pay the price, Likewise, the parents must consider the same.

- Parents are to be sure that their children get to and from practice and games on time. Please be considerate of the fact that our coaches have families to go home to after practices and games by picking your child up on time.
- Parents should support the coach and his/her decisions. Please respect the authority of the coaches and avoid any actions that would cause your athlete to not respect the coach's instructions.
- Parents are asked to assist in working the gate and concessions at home athletic events when needed. You can be scheduled to work at a time when your child is not playing in a game.

The Coach as a Leader

Parents and student athletes must trust that coaches try to make the best decisions for the team, as well as the individuals that make up the team. Coaches are with the team on a daily basis in practice and competition, evaluating character and performance, and therefore will make judgement decisions based **on what they feel is in the best interest of the team.** Playing time, players' positions, and strategy are left to the discretion of the coach. Parents should help their child understand that being a team member means accepting the coach's decisions, even when he/she does not agree with them.

It is also important to remember that coaches are not infallible evaluators of talent and potential, nor are they perfect play-callers. They do not claim to be. Neither are parents. A team does not function well with non-coaches trying to coach. Someone must evaluate and someone must make decisions. Someone must mold the individual personality and emotions into a team. Most often, the coach can make decisions concerning the team with an objectivity that parents do not have. They can do what is best for the team without the emotional bias that parents possess. Parents should not place a child in a tough position of having to decide who they are going to listen to: their coach, or their parent.

This emotional bias and lack of objectivity of parents often times affect the attitudes and behaviors towards officials. Many see the officiating of any game through team-colored glasses. Usually there is a second group or team at the same gym or field who see it differently, through their own team-colored glasses. When athletes hear their parents ridicule and insult officials, they learn the wrong lessons about courtesy, respect, personal responsibility, and self-control.

The following is a list of dos and don'ts for your consideration:

- Do voice your concerns and objections directly and privately to the coach. Do not show disrespect by going to his/her supervisor before discussing it with the coach first.
- Do support the coach in front of your son or daughter.
- If you cannot support the coach after private, calm, and reasonable attempts to solve any problem or concern you have, it is best to remove your son or daughter from the team.
- Do not coach your son or daughter from the stands. It embarrasses your student and it is offensive to others.
- Do not criticize your son/daughter's teammates or the opposing team's players.
- Do not get personal with officials by name-calling and/or insulting them.
- Do remember that it is a game. It can be a good tool to mold character and prepare students for life.
- Do not make disparaging remarks in print or word.

Please do not attempt to speak to a coach directly after a competition. Wait at least 24 hours to contact a coach with your concerns.

Appropriate concerns to discuss with coaches:

- Treatment of your child, mentally and physically
- Ways to help your child improve
- Concerns about your child's behavior

Issues NOT appropriate to discuss with the coach:

- Playing time
- Team strategy
- Play Calling
- Other student-athletes

2023-24 ATHLETIC FEES

SPORT	COST
Football	\$250.00
Volleyball	\$ 150.00
Cross Country	\$ 150.00
Basketball	\$ 150.00
Soccer (if offered)	\$ 150.00
Swimming (if offered)	\$150.00
Baseball	\$ 150.00
Softball	\$ 150.00
Tennis	\$ 150.00
Golf	\$ 150.00 (plus tournament green fees)
Track & Field	\$ 150.00

2023-24 Return to Play Protocol Athletic Guidelines & Response to COVID-19

Due to the current situation in regards to COVID-19, the O'Connell College Preparatory School Athletic Department has issued a "Return to Play Protocol" to provide procedures and guidelines for athletics to follow in an effort to promote the safety of our participants during this time of the pandemic. This protocol will be used to supplement the rules of the athletic handbook to mitigate the possibility of COVID-19 exposure to our athletes, parents, coaching staff, and fans.

O'Connell College Preparatory School policies are subject to change at the discretion of the school. Furthermore, such policies shall be considered in light of the overall policies and proceedings established for the school's students. Any amendments to these policies shall supersede and have control over any previously published guidelines and/or policies.