

Thetford Academy



Athletic Handbook

2025 - 2026

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Mission Statement

Participation on an athletic team can be a rewarding and meaningful experience that enhances a child's education. It is important that students recognize the time demands, responsibility, dedication and sacrifices required when making this kind of commitment. When a student engages in a sport, there exists the possibility of injury. As a result, there is an acceptance on the part of the student and parent of the inherent risks and costs involved in such participation.



Athletic Philosophy

The Thetford Academy Board of Trustees has adopted the following philosophy:

Athletics are a valued part of the diverse Thetford Academy experience, and are based on the Thetford Academy Philosophy and the Academy's five principles: excellence, commitment, caring, cooperation, and respect for diversity. These principles serve as the guidelines for all participants: administrators, coaches, student athletes, parents, and spectators.

The athletic program strives to develop the following: self-discipline, motivation, sportsmanship, social development, responsible team membership, fitness and sport-specific motor skills in the context of competitive play.

Students are encouraged to participate in the Academy's athletic program.

The Academy shall seek coaching staff that know the sport, understand student athletes' developmental needs, are good communicators, promote safety, and serve as positive role models. The Academy shall endeavor to provide equipment and space to facilitate safe and appropriate play.

In order to participate, student athletes shall maintain good academic and social standing as outlined in the Thetford Academy Student Handbook. Team members are expected to make choices that positively affect the health, safety, and well being of themselves and others.

Non-School Competition Rules (VPA Policy)

A member of a school team is a student-athlete who is regularly present for, and actively participates in, all team tryouts, practices, and competitions. Bona fide members of a school team are prevented from missing a high school practice or competition to compete with an out-of-school team, practice, or competition including tournaments, showcases, combines, or other athletic events.

Whenever a conflict arises between the high school team practice/competition and an out-of-school practice/competition on the same day, the high school team practice/competition shall be honored by the student-athlete. Priority must be given at all times to the high school team, its practices, and its contest unless permission has been granted by the school. It is expressly understood that permission shall not be granted regularly.



Athletic Program

Middle School: As student athletes make the transition from youth sports, the middle school programs maintain a focus on participation and skill development. When numbers allow, team sports will be divided by grade level (separating 7 and 8). Teams will not be selected in a best/second best (A/B) process. When two teams exist, members of the 7th-grade team will play in every game in nearly equal amounts. Grade 8 games will involve every player, but will begin to introduce the concept that some players may play more than others. When only one team exists (combining 7 and 8), the 8th grade approach will be employed.

All middle school student athletes will be directed to strive to win, but their success will be measured by their personal development and their desire to continue in our program. Parents can expect middle school student athletes to have four days of commitment on average per week, between practices and games.

High School: For grades 9-12, most sports incorporate two levels: Junior Varsity and Varsity. Team selection will be directed by the Varsity coach in consultation with all Assistant/JV coaches, and will be overseen by the Director of Athletics.

All high school student athletes (including those who were on the varsity team the preceding year) must attend tryouts and all practices (this includes fall sport practices that begin prior to the opening of school) to be considered for the varsity level team. Even if a student athlete does not intend to play on the varsity team, they are strongly encouraged to attend tryouts. If injury, illness or other extenuating circumstance prevents the student athlete from participating within the first week of the season, the student athlete needs to express interest in participating and explain the circumstance of the situation to the coach and Director of Athletics, in order to be able to join the team after the first week. The only exceptions will be granted to new students who arrive at Thetford Academy after the season has begun. These student athletes may try out for the varsity squad if there is space on the team.

Junior Varsity: Emphasis at the JV level will continue to be skill development, but will now begin to focus more on the competitive element of sport. JV participation is designed to prepare students to be optimally competitive for consideration at the varsity level of play. Every attempt will be made to involve all team members in every game, but playing time will be dictated by the coach and may result in students not participating in every game. Athletes may be asked to 'swing' up to the varsity level, which will be need based. Athletes are should feel free to say 'no' and will not be impacted due to their decision.

Varsity: At the varsity level teams will continue the emphasis on skill development, and will focus on the achievement of excellence. Team sizes will be smaller, possibly necessitating tryouts and cuts, to better facilitate the goals of the program. Playing time will not be guaranteed, and will largely be determined by coaches assessing the best student athletes to meet the needs of the event and the overall development of the program. In cases where cuts are necessary, coaches will be responsible for evaluation and final decisions. Varsity participation in some programs (skiing and cross country) is determined by Vermont Principals' Association criteria for team competition within individual sports.



General Regulations

A student athlete and their parent/guardian must complete and submit the Sports Participation Form and the Concussion Acknowledgement Form prior to participating in a scheduled scrimmage or game.

A student must present proof of a satisfactory sports physical examination performed by a doctor once every two (2) years. It is preferred that this be done during the 7th, 9th, and 11th grades, but must be in place for all new students. Participants identified with chronic conditions may be required to have a physical annually as determined by the Director of Athletics. Proof of the physical must be submitted prior to participating in a scrimmage or game.

The season will begin with the first official practice and end with the last game or meet. High school student athletes must attend ten practices before playing in a regular season game. Middle school athletes must attend seven practices before playing in a regular season game.

Student athletes are expected to dress appropriately for their given sport for practices and games. Specific rules regarding practice and game wear may be established on a team specific basis by the coach. Proper equipment is also expected of student athletes. If certain equipment is required to be worn during games (example: shin guards in soccer), it is expected to be worn during practice also.

Academic Eligibility

The following guidelines for participation are intended to support the goals of Thetford Academy's Athletic Philosophy. Thetford Academy is a member of the Vermont Principals' Association.

To participate as a member of a Thetford Academy athletic team, a student must:

- Be a full-time student maintaining a minimum enrollment of five and one half (5 1/2) credits.
- Carry a minimum 2.0 GPA (Grade Point Average)
- Carry no failing grades (F).

We (or the AD) will check grades at the beginning of seasons and consistently throughout the season. Our goal is to ensure grades are above requirements in order for the student to continue to enjoy the health and wellness benefits of athletic participation.

Consequences for GPA below 2.0 or failing grades during grade checks are as follows:

- Step 1 -- 2 weeks of consecutive daily Homework Club sessions, continue practice and competition
- Step 2 -- Continue Homework Club for 1 more week, continue practicing but NO COMPETITION
- Step 3 -- No competition and no practice.

If at any time the student athlete shows signs of decreased effort, responsibility or lack of improvement in class work, the Director of Athletics reserves the right to remove the student athlete from practices, competition or remove them from the team. If a student does not meet the academic requirements to participate in two consecutive seasons, they will not be allowed to participate in the following season.



Code of Conduct

Thetford Academy accepts responsibility for student athletes' behavior while they are in our care – that is, on school grounds, or while in attendance or involved in school-sponsored activities off the Academy's grounds.

Student athletes will demonstrate a commitment to themselves, their team, their classmates, and their school by behaving in a positive, school appropriate manner, and remaining free from the use and/or possession of illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco, nicotine (vaping), and other related paraphernalia. Any violations will follow the Thetford Academy Student and Family Handbook procedures.

Any school-related detention or suspension will be served and satisfied before a student athlete may attend any sport practices or games. Detentions will not be excused for any athletic activity. Students are responsible for communicating missed events due to detentions with coaches. If a student athlete receives three (3) or more detentions for behavioral reasons in a season, he or she may lose the ability to practice, participate in competitions or may be removed from the team based on the severity of the circumstances. This decision will be made in consultation with the Dean of Students and Director of Athletics.

Any school-related multiple-day suspension will result in a minimum of a two-event suspension from participation. Student athletes may not participate in or attend any extra-curricular programs during the term of a school-related suspension (to include the first Saturday and Sunday encompassed by a multiple-day suspension). If a suspension begins with the final event of a season, the second-event suspension will be the first scheduled event of the next season of participation. A student athlete terminated due to conduct from two consecutive seasons will not be allowed to participate in the following season.

Repeated disciplinary actions can result in termination from the team for the remainder of the season per the discretion of the Director of Athletics and Dean of Students.

Coaches reserve the right to set team specific rules. After review and approval of these rules by the Director of Athletics, these rules will be enforced and supported by the coach, Director of Athletics and the School.

Sportsmanship

Thetford Academy prides itself on good sportsmanship from all student athletes. All student athletes are expected to positively represent themselves, their team, and the school while at school and at school-sponsored events. Behavior deemed detrimental to the team, the school, themselves, or the community will result in a minimum of a one-event suspension (regular schedule or tournament events), to a maximum of termination from the team. These circumstances will be reviewed and determined by the Director of Athletics and Dean of Students in consultation with the coaching staff.



Social Media

The expectation of student athletes/parents to represent themselves, their team and Thetford Academy in a positive way extends to all social media outlets. If a student athlete/parents uses any social media outlet in a way that is deemed detrimental to themselves, their team, the school or the community, they may receive the minimum of a one game suspension to a maximum of termination from the team/termination from attending events. These circumstances will be reviewed and determined by the Director of Athletics and Dean of Students in consultation with the coaching staff.

VPA Ejection Rule

Any student ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct or a flagrant foul shall be suspended from the next two contests, (except for football, skiing, and gymnastics, for which the suspension shall be one contest) in the sport from which the student was ejected. If the ejection occurs in the last contest of the season, the student shall be ineligible for the same time in the next sport in which the student participates. If the ejection occurs in the last contest of the student's last sports season, the school shall take appropriate disciplinary action to impose a sanction proportionate to the penalties imposed by these rules and shall report that discipline to the VPA. The suspended student may not be in uniform. A student who is ejected a second time shall be suspended for the remainder of the season in that sport. A student who has been ejected for unsportsmanlike conduct for the second time in a season shall be suspended for the remainder of the season in that sport. This can only be appealed to the VPA.

Parent Communication with Coaches

Communication from coach to parents/guardians:

- Coaching philosophy
- Expectations the coach has for your child, and for the team
- Locations and times of practices and contests
- Team requirements (i.e. practices, special equipment, out of season conditioning)
- Proper behavior by athletes on bus trips; estimated time of return
- Procedures to follow should your child be injured during participation
- Discipline that may result in the denial of your child's participation

Appropriate topics for parents/guardians to discuss with a coach:

- Advance notification of any schedule conflicts
- Your athlete's behavior

Inappropriate issues to discuss with a coach:

- Playing time
- Playcalling
- Other Players



Communication Protocol / Athletic Appeals

Protocol when Addressing Team, Program or Coach Issues or Concerns

If a student athlete has a concern or issue, they should first approach the coach in an attempt to resolve it. If the concern or issue remains unresolved, the student athlete should approach the Director of Athletics. If the matter continues to be unresolved, the parent and student may request a meeting with the coach and the Director of Athletics.

Coaches or student athletes may not be confronted with issues at event sites, including practices, locker rooms, playing fields, courts, etc. Such conversations should be held in a confidential setting, and are best served when all parties can focus on the issues to be addressed.

24 Hour Rule: Coaches will not discuss concerns or issues about an event or situation in an event with parents/guardians or spectators until at least 24 hours after the conclusion of the event.

Athletic Appeals

1. Communication Protocol for athlete, coach conflict:

- First - The student athlete should approach the coach to find a solution to their problem.
- Second - If the problem persists, the parent/guardian should speak to the coach with the player present.
- Third - As a last resort, contact Bri Barnes to help mediate a solution with the athlete and coach.

2. If the concerns or issues remain unresolved, the parent/guardian and/or student athlete may request that the Athletic Committee review the matter. Such requests must be made in writing to the Director of Athletics or Dean of Students.

3. Following a written request from the parent/guardian, the Athletic Committee will be convened. The Athletic Committee is composed of five to seven members of the faculty and/or administration, with the Dean of Students attending in an ex officio capacity. The Director of Athletics, in consultation with the Dean of Students, will chair the Athletic Committee. Concerned parties will be afforded a meeting with the Committee at the earliest possible time. The Committee's final deliberations will be in closed session and their findings will serve as a recommendation to the Head of School.

4. The Head of School will receive and act on recommendations from the Athletic Committee. The Head of School will not act independently of the Athletic Committee deliberations, but will seek to reach a decision in consultation with its members. The Head of School will investigate the points made by the Athletic Committee as necessary. A decision by the Head of School will represent the school's final position. The Board of Trustees will not consider appeals.



Attendance

A student athlete who is absent from school or leaves school early due to illness will not be allowed to participate in that day's extracurricular activities (games and practices). A student athlete must be in attendance for two or more blocks of the school day to participate in that day's athletic program.

Attendance at practice sessions and games is required except due to illness or injury excused by a note from home, or for school-excused events (ex: field trip, college visit). Failure to attend practice may result in a reduction of playing time as deemed appropriate by the coach. When possible, a student athlete should attend practice even if he/she can't participate.

Varsity and Junior Varsity teams are chosen during tryouts which typically take place during the first two days of the season; however, the tryout period could be longer or shorter. All student athletes (including those who were on the varsity team the preceding year) must attend practices from the beginning of the season (this includes soccer "pre-season") to be considered for a varsity team. (New students who arrive at Thetford Academy after the season has begun, but within the first three weeks of the season may be allowed to join a team.)

Student athletes accumulating five (5) practice/game absences during either the fall or spring seasons, or seven (7) during the winter season may be considered for removal from the program. A student athlete missing more than one-half of a practice session will be considered absent. Absences due to detentions and suspensions will be included in the absence total. Absences due to school-related functions will not be included in the absence total. Absences for family vacations will be counted only at the Varsity level.

Code of Conduct for Parents

Thetford Academy is proud to have received the Vermont Principals' Association's Sportsmanship Award at the Barre Auditorium in past years. This recognizes our continued dedication to sportsmanship at TA events. It is expected and appreciated that all participants (administrators, coaches, student athletes, parents and spectators) be supportive and conduct themselves in an appropriate manner before, during, after any athletic event and on social media. Failure to do so, as determined by the administrator on duty or the Director of Athletics, may result in immediate expulsion and/or exclusion from future athletic events. Your support of a positive and sportsmanlike environment at Thetford Academy's athletic events is appreciated.

Cancellations

On school days called off because of inclement weather, Thetford Academy may hold practices and games later in the day if the weather permits. Coaches will notify their team if scheduled activities are to be canceled or postponed. When school is in session and weather at the end of the day results in events being canceled, decisions are generally made between 1:00 and 1:30 p.m. A message will be sent via email, TeamSnap, or the school office may be contacted after 1:30.



Team Travel, Attire, Team Snap and Uniforms

Team Travel / Attire

Athletic team transportation will be provided to and from all athletic contests (high school and middle school), unless otherwise communicated.

Student athletes are expected to travel with the team when provided by Thetford Academy. However, a parent/guardian may request that their student athlete ride with them after the event.

Parents/guardians may also give permission for a student to ride with another parent/guardian by providing a signed note to the coach. If a student athlete is not taking the bus after the competition, the parent/guardian is responsible for the student athlete and must sign them out with the coach prior to leaving with the student athlete.

If a student athlete needs to travel to a game in a different manner than on the bus, they may ride with a parent/guardian, ride with another adult approved by the parent, or drive themselves, with permission from the parent/guardian. The student athlete must arrange this with the coach prior to the day of the game and provide a note signed by the parent for each event. This should only happen in situations when the location of the competition is closer to the students home than to the school, or other extenuating circumstances approved by the coach. A student driver liability waiver form (see attached form) must be filled out, signed and on file with Thetford Academy for a parent to allow a student to assume transportation responsibilities to and from athletics events with the exception of the above noted return trips from which

Student athletes and team personnel will dress appropriately when attending home and away games. This includes: TA Team Apparel and clothing deemed school appropriate.. If there any questions regarding attire, please contact the Director of Athletics.

TeamSnap

All athletics will now use the TeamSnap program for registration. TeamSnap is a web-based program where all registration will be completed as well as other communication such as practice/rehearsal schedules, game/production schedules, updates from coaches, Director of Athletics and additional program communications.

Uniforms

Participants are responsible for all uniforms issued to them. They are responsible for maintaining throughout the season and returning at the end of the season all pieces issued to them, clean and in good repair. They will be liable for lost and damaged items and will be charged a pro-rated cost as determined by the Director of Athletics. In addition, students who have not returned uniforms at the end of the season shall be ineligible for participation in future athletic programs until the uniform is returned.



Member to Member Athletics

Thetford Academy offers the following sports per season:

Fall: Soccer, Cross Country, Golf and Bass Fishing

Winter: Basketball, Indoor Track & Field, and Alpine Skiing

Spring: Baseball, Softball, and Track & Field

If TA doesn't offer a sport you are actively playing and are committed to playing in high school, we participate in member to member programs with Hartford High School.

Please see Bri Barnes, Athletic Director, for more information and guidance.

Please note: For the 2026/2027 season there could be a family contribution towards Member to Member fees. That contribution would not exceed \$500.