

## STATEMENT OF BOARDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

Last reviewed:	June 2020
Next review due:	June 2021
Reviewed by:	Head of Residential Boarding Head of Non-Residential Boarding (host families) Pastoral Director

Boarding is a key aspect of the school's provision. Our aim is for boarding to be a positive experience that enhances school life and helps to develop in students a sense of self-confidence and individual responsibility while at the same time enabling them to live happily and study effectively. We aim to ensure that students are comfortable and well looked after in their boarding environment and that their welfare and wellbeing are fully provided for.

Around 50% of our Sixth Form students and almost all of the students in the International School are boarders. The boarding options we provide are varied and offer a great deal of flexibility and choice for students and parents. We offer two types of boarding arrangements: in our boarding houses or with carefully selected host families close to our teaching buildings.

Our boarding houses are varied in size ranging from 15 to 60. The students are close in age to one another and the houses are run in a way that reflects the school's general approach to students of this age, with a balance of structure, flexibility and a high degree of personal attention. Students are well looked after; at the same time, they are expected to take responsibility for being part of a community. Relationships among boarders and between boarders and the house staff reflect the nature of personal interactions that we aim to foster in all aspects of life at d'Overbroeck's. The result is that our boarding houses provide a strong sense of community and a comfortable, convivial and supportive environment which contributes positively to the students' personal development.

Host family arrangements, as we run them here, give us the flexibility to meet individual requests from students and parents (for example a piano on which to practice, a private bathroom or a family with pets). They also provide a supportive, homely setting which, in particular for international students living a long way from home, offers a valuable opportunity to live in a welcoming family environment and to develop linguistic skills and cultural awareness at the same time.

### **A. Boarding houses**

There are several boarding houses here and all provide a welcoming and comfortable place for our students to live in.

Most of our boarding houses are co-educational and the boys and girls share a communal area where they can relax, study and enjoy each other's company. In the social area they can play board games, watch movies, form study groups and relax.

The accommodation is split into girls' and boys' areas which are securely separated. Each house is overseen by a residential Head of House who is supported by a Boarding Assistant. A member of staff is available to the students 24 hours a day to support them with both their academic and social development.

Students have all meals in the school dining rooms. The food is provided by Holroyd Howe, a leading catering company for independent schools. The food is of a very high standard and we are able to cater to a variety of dietary requirements.

There is a study period each evening and a set curfew. These vary a little depending on the age of the student. Each student has their own study space in his or her room. All rooms have Wi-fi access.

A number of trips and visits are organised on some of the weekends for boarders and day students. The school is just a short walk from Summertown – a lovely part of Oxford with a theatre, swimming pool, leisure centre and cafés. The centre of Oxford is about 15 minutes by bus.

The boarding experience is an opportunity to live with others and to become independent. The historic and beautiful city of Oxford also provides access to superb leisure and study facilities such as theatres, museums, galleries, libraries and parks.

Both central Oxford and Summertown offer a good mix of shops including banks, supermarkets, cafés and places to eat.

## **B. Living with a host family**

This option for Upper Sixth students offers the most scope for flexibility and individual choice. We work closely with a wide range of host families in North Oxford, the majority of whom have provided accommodation for our students for several years. Generally, every student has his or her own single study-bedroom; some also have a private bathroom. Breakfast and an evening meal are normally provided. There are some self-catering options for those who request them though we reserve the self-catering option for students who are aged 18 or over where we are satisfied that they will be able to cope and thrive in a self-catering environment.

A great deal of time and care is taken in selecting the right host family for a particular student. This is done by Emma Brett (Head of Non-Residential Boarding) after detailed discussions with students and parents. Wherever possible, we will suggest at least two different options, and the final choice will be made by the student and his or her parents after they have visited the houses and met the host families.

It is not always possible for parents and students, if they are living abroad at the time, to visit the school and see the full range of boarding options. In such cases, we aim to go through the same process as far as possible by telephone, Skype/Facetime and email, and to give parents and students sufficient information on which to base their choice.

## **The Boarding Team**

All boarding arrangements are made and monitored by the following staff:

- **Head of Non-Residential Boarding (Host Families) – Emma Brett**  
[emma.brett@doverbroecks.com](mailto:emma.brett@doverbroecks.com) 01865 688642
- **Head of Residential Boarding – Felisa Deas**  
[Felisa.deas@doverbroecks.com](mailto:Felisa.deas@doverbroecks.com) 01865 688482

Felisa and Emma are always available to students and parents. In an emergency, senior staff may also be contacted in the evening or at the weekend via an out-of-hours number that is given to all students and parents at the start of the academic year.

### **Private fostering arrangements**

Any arrangement in which a student, under the age of 16, is living with a host family for more than 28 days is classified as a 'private fostering arrangement'.

The terminology is potentially misleading: 'private fostering' has nothing to do with 'being a foster parent.' It refers to an informal arrangement made by parents for a child to live with another family. The private fostering team (within Oxford City Social Services Department) have a duty to ensure that all children under 16 years living with a host family in Oxford are being appropriately cared for and that they are well and happy throughout their stay with their host family.

As required under the relevant regulations, d'Overbroeck's liaises directly with the private fostering team regarding any placement of a student under 16 years of age who is going to live with a host family for more than 28 days. This applies to only a very small number now, about one to two students each year.

Emma Brett gives the private fostering team basic information about each student (name, age, nationality, guardian/parent details) and details about which host family they will be living with. This has to be done soon after the placement is confirmed and no later than seven days after the start of term.

There are specific criteria that these host families must meet, and the private fostering team will ensure that d'Overbroeck's has carried out all the required checks.

The private fostering team will contact the parents or guardian of the students concerned to give them their contact details; they will visit the host family early in the academic year to meet the family members and to check the quality of the accommodation; and they will meet with the students at school once every 6 weeks until either the student has reached his or her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday or s/he is no longer living with a host family. We will notify the private fostering team if there is any change to the arrangement or when the arrangement ends.

Our policy and practice in this respect are in line with the Children Act 1989 and 2004, the UKVI requirements for Tier 4 visas, and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.

### **Pastoral support and internal communication**

The pastoral systems at d'Overbroeck's are described in full elsewhere in our literature. It is essential that the Director of Pastoral Care and Wellbeing, Heads of Residential and Non-residential boarding, School Nurse, Designated Safeguarding Leads, house parents and other staff with pastoral responsibilities communicate regularly. Various channels are in place to ensure that this is the case.

### **Seeking boarders' views**

We aim to elicit the views of boarders at regular intervals and to act on the comments, suggestions and requests that emerge as far as is practically possible.

In addition to encouraging informal communication at all times, the following initiatives are in place:

- A minimum of one written survey of boarders' views is conducted in each academic year.
- There is a Sixth Form Student Forum and a Student Council in The International School, where students' views on our boarding provision and meals are collected and shared.
- House meetings are held in each of the boarding houses at least once every half-term.
- Wide-ranging feedback questionnaires are sent to all students and parents (day and boarding) at the end of each academic year. These address all aspects of the school's provision, including boarding and pastoral support.

**Personal development**

Our aim is for boarding to be a positive experience that enhances school life and helps to develop in students a sense of self-confidence and individual responsibility.

The school's policy on the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of students is published on the website and available to parents and students on request.

**Equal opportunities**

Tolerance, fairness and mutual respect are at the core of our school ethos. In boarding as in all other aspects of life at d'Overbroeck's, we aim to maintain a mutually supportive community marked by tolerance, flexibility and a thoughtful regard for others.

Key to our thinking is the importance of giving students the space to be themselves and to grow and develop in a context in which they feel valued and secure. We take a very strong stance on anything that constitutes bullying in any form or medium, including cyberbullying, and aim to ensure that no student is discriminated against in any way, as a result of any of the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 or because of cultural or linguistic background, special educational need or academic or sporting ability. Please see our Equal Opportunities and Anti Bullying policy documents which can be found on the school web site.

**Medical provision**

We have a full time nurse on the Boarding Team – Rebekah Overton-Cox.

Unless they are already registered with a General Practitioner here in Oxford, all our boarding students are asked to register with the Banbury Road Medical Practice. To make the registration process as quick and straightforward as possible for the students, staff from the medical practice are normally present at our induction days at the start of the academic year, and the registration process takes place there and then.

The practice is geographically close to our school buildings and consists of a number of doctors, both male and female, ensuring that students can always see a doctor quickly if and when the need arises. Appointments can be made by calling into the practice, on the telephone or on the Internet.

Contact details for the practice are as follows:

The Banbury Road Medical Practice  
172 Banbury Road  
Oxford OX2 7BT      Tel: 01865 515731

**Dental treatment**

Boarding students who need to see a dentist at short notice are able to make appointments with a local dental practice with which we have an ongoing arrangement. This is a private practice and treatment is chargeable.

Contact details for the practice are as follows:

Dr Dhami  
279 Banbury Road  
Oxford OX2 7JS      Tel: 01865 558822

**Seeing an optician**

There are a number of opticians within easy reach of school buildings. Students may walk into the optician's premises and make their own appointments or they may ask their Houseparent or a member of staff in the school office to help make an appointment on their behalf.

**School Counsellor**

We have two fully qualified and experienced Counsellors who are available to see students in school during term-time. Students are free to make contact directly with the Counsellors (their contact details are displayed on leaflets around school buildings); and, in some cases, we may suggest to a student that they may benefit from some counselling. In all cases, the discussions between Counsellor and student remain confidential, unless the student, or anyone else associated with them or known to them, is at risk of significant harm.

**Independent Listener**

The school has a nominated 'Independent Listener', who is not a member of the school staff. Boarders can make contact with the independent listener at any time if they wish to raise any issues that they don't feel able to discuss with a member of staff. The Independent Listener's name and contact details are prominently posted on noticeboards both in the boarding houses and teaching buildings.

Our independent Listener is Mrs Pat Harris Tel: 07789 147750.

**Helplines and other contacts**

Also posted prominently on noticeboards where all boarders can see them are the contact details for Childline and for the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

**Smoking**

Smoking and vaping in any form are not allowed in any part of the school's buildings or grounds.

**Drugs Policy**

The school's drugs policy is printed in the Parent Handbook. A printed copy is available to any parent or student who may wish to receive one.

**Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children**

The d'Overbroeck's policy on Safeguarding Children is published on the school website and in Parent and Staff Handbooks. Printed copies are available to parents and students on request.

**Complaints Procedure for Parents of Pupils**

The school's Complaints Procedure for parents is printed in the Parent Handbooks and published on the website. Printed copies are available on request.

**Disability inclusion policy**

The school's Disability Inclusion policy and Accessibility Plan are available on request.

### **Related documents**

- Parent Handbook
- Boarding Handbooks sent to boarding students and parents
- The Sixth Form Information booklet
- The 'Guide for International Students'

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