

DCPS Introduction of Flexi-boarding

FAQs: Parents and Guardians

This document outlines the new flexi-boarding provision we are putting in place at the Prep School and seeks to answer any questions you might have.

Why is flexi-boarding being introduced at the Prep School?

Following market research carried out by the school amongst our day families and, in common with many schools of our type, the option of the school providing the opportunity for day pupils to board occasionally appeared to be in demand. A review was carried out involving staff and senior management across the Foundation, taking into account all those in our school community, and it was felt appropriate to seek ways to introduce a flexi-boarding option to parents. Flexi-boarding is increasingly popular at Dean Close (senior) School and it was agreed that this provision would offer a helpful taster for those families that may wish to experience this option once their child moves 'across the road'.

Why is the school not able to host occasional boarders in the current boarding houses?

Currently we do enjoy hosting occasional boarders from our day families in our existing boarding houses. However, due to the popularity of full-time and day-boarding, there are often very few beds available to cater for the increasing demand for occasional boarding. The school is also mindful of not unsettling the 'home-from-home' nature of the currently full boarding houses, with the comings and goings of increasing numbers of flexi-boarders. Therefore, in the interest of our current boarding pupils, as well as providing choice to our day families, a separate boarding house has been created in Hardy House. Hardy House is located in the heart of the Prep School, close to the other boarding houses.

What will the boarding experience be like for future flexi-boarders in Hardy House?

Flexi-boarders will remain as part of their usual day houses until the time that they are signed out and transferred to the care of the staff on duty in Hardy House. Flexi-boarders will join the current full boarders and, after dinner, they will either be given time to complete their prep supervised by a member of staff in Hardy House, or will be free to join the other boarders in their free time outside, whilst under staff supervision. In common with the current boarding houses, at their age specific bedtimes, the flexi-boarding pupils will return to Hardy House, shower and prepare for bed. Lights out will be at the same time as those in their age group in the boarding houses. In the morning they will be woken by the live-in member of staff working in the boarding house, wash and get dressed, before joining the full boarders for breakfast from 7:20am. After breakfast they will return to Hardy House to do their teeth and pack up their personal belongings, before returning to their day house to start their usual school day.

What time will flexi-boarders go to bed and who will put them to bed?

Flexi-boarders in Hardy House will go to bed on the same schedule as those in the other boarding houses. They will be put to bed by the live-in member of the boarding staff, whose specific role will be to look after the flexi-boarders in their care. The current bedtimes are: Years 3-5: lights out by 8:00pm; Year 6: lights out 8:30; Year 7: lights out 8:50; Year 8: lights out 9:10pm. These times are later in the summer months when it is light outside.

How will the new flexi-boarding house be staffed?

Hardy House will be staffed by a member of staff whose specific boarding role will be to care for the flexi-boarders booked in for each night. This member of staff will not be taken from the staffing of the current boarding houses,

but will have previous boarding experience and will be charged to look after all the flexi-boarders in their care for that night.

How will this new boarding house affect our current full and day boarders?

Boarding remains a key part of our school community and we expect boarding numbers to remain high in the Prep School. We want to ensure our boarding community is not disrupted by introducing greater numbers of flexi-boarders, hence the choice to have a separate flexi-boarding house. Options in similar schools place occasional boarders in current boarding houses and we are aware that this can, at times, be disruptive to the 'home-from-home' atmosphere so carefully nurtured there. We are fortunate to have space in Hardy House available, in the heart of the Prep School, to provide a separate boarding house dedicated to flexi-boarding.

How many pupils will be able to stay over in Hardy House?

Hardy House has a capacity of six boys and six girls. We are purposeful in planning that the number of flexi-boarders will not be large, since we are keen to ensure that the provision of full and day boarding is the school's main boarding provision. There are a number of bedrooms and, of course, separate bathrooms for the boys and girls. The boys' and girls' sections of the house are separated by the live-in staff accommodation.

Which nights will Hardy House be open?

Unless special arrangements have been made with the school, flexi-boarders will only be able to stay in Hardy House on weekday nights, from Monday to Friday.

What will be the per night charge for staying in Hardy House?

Overnight charges for pupils opting to flexi-board will initially be £45 and this will be added to a parents invoice each term.

When will Hardy House open and will parents be able to have a look around before booking in their children?

We plan for Hardy House to be open from the start of the new academic year in September 2020. Once the building work is completed, existing parents will be able to book in a visit to view the new flexi-boarding house by contacting the front office at the Prep School. We welcome feedback from parents regarding their experience, and that of their children, in this new development.

How far in advance will parents need to book their children in for a night in Hardy House?

Parents are asked to give a week's notice for each night they wish to book their child into Hardy House. A pupil is allowed to stay a maximum of two nights during a seven day period, unless special arrangements are made and agreed with the school beforehand.

What type of activities will be available to flexi-boarders in the evenings?

In common with current full boarders, flexi-boarders will be able to enjoy letting off steam outside in the extensive, and safe, school grounds. They will be supervised by staff on duty, or join with full boarders in one of the current boarding houses, participating in some of the many activities that take place each evening. These activities include crafts, cooking, board games, table tennis tournaments and the like.

What if my child needs to finish their school work? Will time and space be given to this?

Absolutely. Staff on duty will ask each flexi-boarder if they have to complete school work and, if so, they will work in a supervised area alongside other pupils needing to do the same. During the evening there will also be opportunities for pupils to find a quiet place to read or to chat with their friends, if desired.

What is provided and what is not provided in Hardy House?

Flexi-boarding pupils will be expected to bring all of the equipment and uniform they will need for a normal school day, plus their home clothes, pyjamas, wash kit and any medication that they may require. This will be handed into the member of staff on duty.

Will mobile phones be allowed to be brought into school by flexi-boarders?

Flexi-boarders will be allowed to bring into school a mobile phone for the purpose of contacting their parents during the evening. In common with all pupils, these devices will need to be signed into their day house during the school day and handed into the member of staff on duty in Hardy House each evening at the allocated time.

Will there be a charge for being a 'no-show' due to plans changing at the last minute?

Due to the costs incurred by providing this new boarding provision, no refund can be offered to those parents wishing to change their plans up to a week before their child stays for a night at the school. If a parent chooses to remove their child at the last minute, once a booking has been received the charge will still appear on their school invoice.

Will priority booking be given to some age groups or for particular days?

Currently there are no plans to offer priorities to particular year groups for the use of Hardy House. Parents will be informed should these arrangements change.

How will the booking for a night in Hardy House be carried out?

Bookings will be initially arranged through the school's front office, where reservation forms will be available. Prior to the confirmation of a bed for the night, the forms will need to be completed in their entirety and parents will be contacted once the booking is confirmed. No confirmation can be given without all the required information being submitted.

What will happen if my child is unwell during their night at school?

In common with all our boarders, the welfare of your child is our highest priority. The school's health centre is on call throughout the day and night. It will be the role of the member of staff on duty in the boarding house to contact them in the first instance, should there be a medical concern. Parents will also be contacted should the concern persist and, in extreme cases, outside medical assistance will be sought.