

Re-founded 1555

Ripon Grammar School

Engineering Specialism within a Grammar School



21st July 2016

Dear Parents,

Boarding 2016-2017

We are keen to ensure that we provide the best experience and support for our boarders at Ripon Grammar School and are committed to continually reflecting upon and reviewing our policies and practices to ensure that we meet the needs of our boarders and their families as effectively as possible. As part of this process we have decided to make a few small changes to our routines and practices from September 2016. Some of these changes are a result of observations we have made as a staff team, while others have been informed by conversations with parents or by the recent student and parent questionnaires completed. This letter sets out the main changes and the rationale for them as well as touching on a couple of other areas where we thought some clarification would be helpful.

Changes to the supervision and organisation of evening prep

At the moment all boarders in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd years complete their homework in the library (SH) or prep room (JH) between 6:30pm and 8:00pm. From September we intend to organise prep a little differently with boarders being placed in one of three levels of supervision depending upon their age, their ability to manage their own learning and their most recent effort grades. This will hopefully allow us to work more closely with the boarders who need our support most, while also providing parents with a greater degree of control where it is needed. These three levels of supervision will be:

High supervision

- Boarders must work in the library or prep room under the close supervision of house staff.
- House staff to monitor the homework set via the homework timetable and pupils' planners.
- House staff to check the quality of each piece of homework.
- House staff to complete a prep record sheet for each boarder in high supervision with comments about the work completed, the time taken and what remains to be done. This sheet will be sent home with boarders at the end of the week so that parents can see what remains to be done over the weekend.

Medium supervision

- Boarders must work in the library or prep room and under supervision of house staff.
- House staff to monitor the work completed with occasional checks of pupil planners.

Low supervision

- Boarders may choose to work in the library or prep room or their own dorms.
- Boarders must normally be working in their own dorms.
- Staff will periodically visit dorms to check on how boarders are working.

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All of our first year boarders will be placed in the high supervision group for the whole of their first year in boarding, but as they grow older they will hopefully be able to move to lower levels of supervision. We think it is important that boarders develop independence and are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, but we also recognise the need to provide some boarders with more structured support in order to enable them to achieve their full potential. Ultimately any boarder from any year group could be placed under high supervision if subject teachers raise concerns about their progress or if effort grades suggest that action is needed.

Changes to the use of mobile phones in the house

The technology our boarders are bringing into the boarding houses has changed dramatically and rapidly over the last couple of years. Now almost every boarder has a smart phone, often with access to a 4G network. As technology changes the habits of our boarders are changing too and we have become concerned at just how much some of our boarders use and depend upon their phones. Wi-Fi access in the house is only made available to boarders in the 4th year and above and this access is heavily filtered and is only available at certain times. However, the advent of 4G means that in reality most of our boarders can access the internet through their own devices, thus bypassing our filtering and controls.

In the first instance we would encourage parents to give serious consideration to the devices and the contracts that they are giving to their children and to explore the controls that can be put in place on phones. The following link to the digital parenting area of the website of the Family Online Safety Institute is probably a good place to start:

<https://www.fosi.org/good-digital-parenting/>

In the coming year we would also like to make some changes to our policies and practices around mobile phone use in the houses. The first change is that we intend to ban the use of any mobile devices (including iPods for listening to music) during our supervised prep sessions in the library (SH) or prep room (JH). Use of phones for texting, gaming and searching the net has always been forbidden in prep, but as the lure of phones has grown we now feel it necessary to ban the presence of these devices entirely during prep.

Secondly we intend to change the way we control mobile phone use at bedtime. At the moment devices are collected at lights out for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year boarders. From September we will be collecting in devices thirty minutes earlier than this and will be collecting devices from boarders up to and including the 4th year. We hope this will make our bedtime routine run more smoothly while not preventing boarders from contacting their parents in the evening (something we think is very important). Removing devices earlier might also encourage our boarders to read more or just to engage in a little more face to face conversation with the other boys and girls in their dorm!

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We believe it is important to develop the responsibility and independence of our boarders as they grow older, so there is no intention to impose these controls on 5th and 6th form boarders unless we have serious concerns about them (or unless parents request that a higher level of control be imposed). However, all of our boarders will continue to receive Internet safety training and the safe and healthy use of mobile devices will continue to be something we discuss in the house and in our house tutor group meetings.

Greater monitoring of uniform

In the new academic year we also intend to monitor the uniform of our boarders more closely. We recognise that as boarders often get much of their uniform washed at school it is more difficult to monitor the state of repair (and the fit) of uniform. Similarly school shoes might often stay in the boarding house every weekend and experience suggests that many boarders are unlikely to remember to inform their parents that the sole of their school shoes is about to completely detach itself!

To help address this issue and to ensure that our boarders always look their best we will be conducting more regular uniform checks and house parents will be contacting home to inform parents of any issues or if any new uniform needs to be purchased. Naturally we will continue to repair uniform in the houses whenever we can and to encourage the boys and girls to take responsibility for their belongings, but we hope that parents will welcome greater communication from the house staff on this issue.

To help us avoid uniform and kit going missing it would be very helpful if parents could ensure that all clothing is clearly named. By far the most effective method of doing this is through sewn in nametapes.

Bedding

To help us to get the bedding of the boys changed, laundered and returned to its rightful owners it would be very helpful if parents could ensure that boarders return in September with two full sets of bedding. This will allow us to immediately replace bedding when it is removed for washing and will ensure that bedding is properly rotated. Please we would be grateful if parents could also ensure that all bedding is clearly labelled, including sheets and pillowcases. Again, sewn-in nametapes would be the best way of doing this (the new larger nametapes required for school PE kit would be ideal).

Administration of medicines

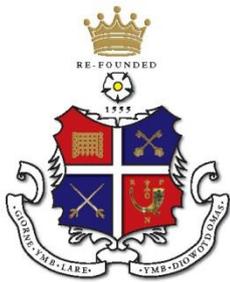
If your son or daughter is ill during term time and you would like the house staff to administer prescription medicines please could parents be aware of some of the statutory guidelines within which house staff are required to operate. We are only allowed to administer drugs that have been prescribed by a doctor and which carry a doctor's label. We also need parents to complete and sign a form each and every time new medication is prescribed. We have attached this form to this letter and you might

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find it convenient to save this to your home computer for future reference. Please do not send your son or daughter back to the boarding houses with the drugs in their care and without the required paperwork. We appreciate that this can be inconvenient, but we must operate within the legal guidelines set by the government.

Changes to the evening routine –Sixth Form

We will be adjusting the evening routine slightly for our sixth form boarders from September. At the moment the time for 'lights out' for these year groups is 11:30pm. We feel this is a little too late and from September we will ask all sixth form boarders to be in their dorms by 10:45pm with 'lights out' at the new time of 11:00pm. We hope this will help to prevent our sixth form boarders becoming overly tired.

Contacting the houses

If you need to contact the houses about issues such as absence, medical appointments or giving permission for boarders to visit friends etc. please would parents use the School House and Johnson House email addresses in the first instance. This allows all boarding staff to access these messages and should ensure that the appropriate member of duty staff is able to access the required information. By all means copy in Senior Houseparents, but please could the following email addresses be used as well:

schoolhouse@ripongrammar.co.uk
johnsonhouse@ripongrammar.co.uk

Obviously if you are writing about a more private matter or something which you wish to address to a specific member of staff there is no need to use these addresses.

The other main way of contacting the houses is through the house telephone numbers (during boarding hours: 4pm-8:45am). These numbers are as follows:

School House: 07410 618058
Johnson House: 01765 604397

Providing ingredients for Food Technology lessons

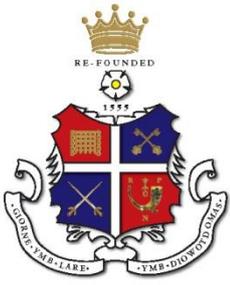
We would like to remind parents of students in the lower school that both houses are able to store ingredients for boarders, including those items that need refrigerating. It is difficult for the houses to provide these ingredients during the week, so we would be grateful if parents could send their children back to boarding with the ingredients they need at the start of the week.

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And finally,

We would like to thank all of our parents for their help and support over the past twelve months and wish all of our boarders and their families a fantastic summer break. Thank you too to those parents who took the time to complete our recent questionnaire. The feedback was generally very positive indeed, but the suggestions for future improvements will continue to inform our continuing efforts to make boarding at Ripon Grammar School the very best experience it can be.

With best wishes

Ben Fearnley
(Senior House Parent, School House)

Ruth Smith
(Senior House Parent, Johnson House)

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