



## **Boarding Policy**

### **Incorporating Statement of Boarding Principles and Practice**

#### **Aim**

Boarding at The Mount School York empowers each girl to unlock and fulfil her potential - academically, socially, culturally, emotionally and spiritually. At the heart of our boarding community are the strong guiding principles of our Quaker ethos, upon which our school is founded. We aim to provide and maintain a home from home experience in which girls can flourish in a safe and caring environment.

#### **Overview**

There is one boarding house at the Mount. School House is situated in the main school building. The boarding house is run by a resident Head of Boarding (who acts in loco parentis), supported by a team including Assistant Houseparents and Graduate Assistant(s). The boarding house is well staffed in relation to the number of pupils we accommodate.

All staff new to the Mount follow a programme of induction and training, co-ordinated by the Head of Boarding. The Head of Boarding has overall responsibility for boarding in the school, and liaises regularly with the school's Boarding Governor, Head, and DSL. The Boarding House and study areas have good facilities with Wi-Fi provision for computer access.

Our Boarding House, which is for girls aged 11-18, is organised vertically. The first floor is primarily for Year 7 to Year 11 girls, and the second floor is for College, Year 10 & Year 11 girls. Boarders are spaciously accommodated in shared bedrooms for typically three to four, and in some cases two girls. Rooming is designed to promote the development of friendships, leadership, integration, cultural tolerance, immersion, and appreciation. Girls are consulted prior to rooms being allocated, with changes made when necessary. The House is structured to provide a nurturing environment in which every girl can grow and discover her best self.

The Boarding House has an experienced and qualified team of residential staff, who work in partnership with parents and guardians, and liaise closely with academic staff. There is always a member of staff on duty who resides in the Boarding House overnight, and further members of staff resident in the wider school. When needed, the girls knock on the door or ring the doorbell of the member of staff on overnight duty, and there is also an emergency duty mobile phone contact number. There are always two members of house staff on duty overnight, with one of those two on call in case of emergency. House staff are a mixture of qualified teachers and support staff who provide both academic and pastoral support for the girls in our care.

#### **Ethos and Statement of Boarding Principles**

At the heart of our boarding community are the strong guiding principles of the Quaker ethos, upon which our school is founded. We endeavour to:

**Challenge girls to think and live adventurously.** Boarders are encouraged to participate in all suitable areas of school life, including taking part in the boarders' weekend activity programme and whole house community events and trips. Pupils develop the ability to question, debate, try new pursuits and take positive risks. Weekday and Weekend Activities provide ample opportunities for pupils to expand their horizons, try new things, nurture their interests, and step outside their comfort zone in a supportive and collaborative community.

**Ensure girls respect and value every individual.** To embrace differences and cultural diversity, and to have the courage to harness their unique selves is a tenet of boarding life. Pupils celebrate,

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observe, and participate in key religious festivals, including Ramadan and Lunar New Year, as well as Christian festivals, whether actively or through supporting their peers at these times. Diversity is acknowledged, facilitated, and celebrated by staff and pupils.

**Enable girls to have the freedom for everyone to flourish in a calm and caring community.**

Like all pupils at The Mount School, boarders are encouraged to embody the Quaker values of the school so that all can enjoy a calm and caring community. Morning Meetings give pupils time to reflect privately and grow spiritually in a collective silence. Pupils are encouraged to attend Friargate Meeting House should they feel it would be valuable to them and their beliefs. Pupils take pride in their shared responsibilities for the governance of the boarding community and are empathetic towards the needs of others.

**Inspire girls to strive for personal excellence.** Pupils are aspirational and relish autonomy in directing their study and free time, within a supportive academic environment. Boarders have access to all school facilities in our extensive grounds, and are motivated to work hard, stretch, and challenge both themselves and others. Boarders are encouraged to take full advantage of the school's music, art, and sports facilities as well as the Library and other classrooms, at various times in the evenings and at weekends. Alongside the wider school staff, our boarding staff in setting targets and encouraging the boarders to set realistic and aspirational goals.

**Empower girls to make a positive contribution to our changing world.** Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility in all aspects of life in the House, including Boarding Council leadership opportunities such as our Eco Warriors who champion recycling, sustainability and eco-friendliness within the boarding house, and social leaders who promote inclusivity and mentorship opportunities amongst peers of all ages and backgrounds. Starting small, boarders gain the skills and confidence needed to make a genuine difference to their world, and to take their place as the next generation of global thinkers.

**Overseas Pupils** The Mount School has many boarders from a variety of countries. This diversity of languages, religions, and cultural backgrounds means our student body is an international tapestry, enlivening and enriching the school experience for all pupils. Some are British children of parents working abroad, while many are pupils for whom English is not their first language. Our aim is to maintain a healthy balance and mix of cultures for the continued benefit of all. In addition to permanent, full-time boarders, as well as weekly and flexi-boarders, we also accept a number of short-stay visitors, usually girls from European countries, who stay for a short period of time e.g. three weeks to one term to experience life in a British boarding school.

All overseas students are required to have an educational guardian in this country. Guardians are appointed by the parents and are expected to accommodate the girls should the school not be able to do so for any reason. This includes school holidays, illness, suspension, and in the unlikely event of the school being closed in an emergency. For further information please read the Guardianship Policy.

The English as an Alternative Language (EAL) Department embraces all overseas students from a wide representation of countries. We aim to provide teaching and support to ensure that all international students are fully integrated into the school. In school and Boarding, girls are encouraged to speak English in common areas, and with others to ensure that they utilise every opportunity to develop their verbal skills. Those in the UK for the entirety or conclusion of their secondary and collegiate education aim to take GCSEs and A Levels, in addition to the EAL certificated courses. Those visiting the school for one year or part of a year aim primarily to improve their English, unless otherwise dictated by their schools back home. Girls attend lessons with their year group, and are encouraged to join in as many extra-curricular activities, clubs, and weekend activities as possible.

**Student Voice** Student voice is important and valued by both students and staff. Boarders can communicate their thoughts and wishes in a number of ways. These include the Boarding Council,

house prefects, suggestion boxes, questionnaires, House Meetings, one-to-one meetings with House staff and via the College Leadership Team member for Boarding and College Boarding Representative.

**Behaviour** Positive behaviour is promoted in the House and boarders are encouraged to be role models for younger pupils. Through Girls on Board training, many pupils develop the skills and confidence to navigate friendship issues in a positive and supportive way. The Boarding House follows the school's Behaviour Policy when dealing with rewards and sanctions. Any sanctions given by Boarding are recorded in the staff logbook and/or on Wellbeing Manager. Any major sanctions are recorded and held centrally.

**Communication** Telephone and email are the primary methods of communication with parents and guardians. We acknowledge the importance of trying to work in close partnership with parents, communicating regularly with boarders and their families, guardians, and agents. House staff have school email addresses so they can be contacted, and parents are given the whole boarding team email so they can communicate generic messages to all those on staff, such as messages seeking sleepover permissions or requests for any boarders' immediate needs or additional support. Emails containing sensitive and confidential information are recommended to be sent directly to the Head of Boarding as appropriate.

Boarders are also encouraged to maintain healthy, regular and often close contact with their families. Boarders also maintain lines of direct communication with boarding staff and each other, engaging frequently with the boarding Teams group chat, sharing live location with boarding staff when seeking offsite permissions, and regularly communicating via Teams messages and phone calls to the boarding duty mobile.

Communication with non-boarding staff is maintained via Pastoral Leadership Team meetings, regular, informal meetings between the Head of Boarding and Heads of Year, emails and wellbeing manager updates, close working relationships with academic staff, and in staff meetings where issues are raised and discussed when appropriate.

Boarding staff meet regularly, both formally and informally to discuss current matters impacting the girls. Boarding staff meetings take place a minimum of once per week. The boarding diary/logbook, held on OneNote, is immediately available to all boarding staff and is used to hand over and communicate all essential information such as offsite permissions, illness, fridge temperature checks, maintenance requests, pupils of concern, and occasional flexi boarders.

In Admissions joining documents, parents and boarders are given a Boarding Handbook which outlines general information about the Boarding House, including expectations and key rules.

**Complaints** Whilst complaints are rare, there may be times that boarders wish to discuss an issue, concern, or suggestion. These can be brought to Boarding staff in the first instance and staff will endeavour to respond and resolve robustly and in a reasonable time frame. If any of these are not resolved, the matter can be brought to the attention of the Deputy Head of School. If there is still cause for concern, or if the complaint is about Boarding staff, this can also be raised with the Deputy Head of School and/or the Head. A copy of the Complaints Procedure is displayed in the House and is also in the Boarding Handbook.

**Search and Confiscation** The Boarding House follows the DfE guidelines for searching, screening and confiscation and this is outlined in the school's Searching and Confiscation Policy, which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

**Technology** Boarders are expected to follow the school's Digital, Technology and Online Safety Policy. This includes not bypassing the firewall by using VPNs, cellular mobile data or other means. Pupil Wi-Fi is switched off in school between 23:00-06:00, including in the boarding house. Mobile

phones are to be handed in overnight for pupils in Years 7-10. Specific social media sites are opened for boarders between the hours of 6-10pm. More information can be found in the Boarding Handbook.

**Pocket Money and Personal Belongings** All boarders are provided with a lockable space where they are encouraged to store items of value, including personal documents. Where pupils request it, valuable items may be stored securely in the school safe and will be signed in and out with the pupil's and an authorising staff member's signature. As part of safeguarding practice, the school may store pupils' passports securely with the pupil's agreement and, where appropriate, with parental or guardian consent. Passports will remain accessible to pupils when required.

**Wellbeing** Our boarders' wellbeing is at the forefront of all procedures we follow in the Boarding House. Our pupils are supported by an extensive and experienced pastoral team. Should they need to turn to somebody, they may reach out to, amongst others: a trusted friend or mentor amongst the trained student prefects and leaders in the Boarding House, their Personal Tutor or a trusted teacher, their Head of Year, the Head or Deputy Head of School, the Head of Boarding, Assistant Houseparents and boarding staff, or the School Nurse, who is based in our warm, friendly, and caring Health Centre, further supported by the School counsellor.

**Child Protection** Child protection and safeguarding are of paramount importance in our Boarding setting. Boarding staff take part in regular safeguarding updates and work closely with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Any concerns are reported to the DSL. The DSL also delivers safeguarding training to pupils who take on peer mentoring roles. The Boarding House follows the school Safeguarding Policy which should be read in conjunction with this policy.

Boarders have access to an Independent Person, someone suitably separate from the school but still subject to DBS and safer recruitment checks. The purpose of the Independent Person is for Boarders to be able to speak with someone independent of the school and, if necessary, raise any concerns that they may feel are not being listened to within school. The Independent Person is introduced to all boarders, comes in each term to offer drop-in sessions in person, and can be contacted via Teams. The procedure for contacting the Independent Person is displayed on posters in the Boarding House and in the Boarding Handbook.

## **Appendix I - Male Staff Working in Boarding**

This appendix outlines the guidelines and expectations for male staff members working in the boarding environment at The Mount School, York. The welfare and safety of our students and staff are of utmost importance, and this policy aims to create a safe and secure living environment for all boarding students and all staff living and working amongst them in the boarding environment.

The Mount School is committed to ensuring a safe and supportive boarding experience for all students. Male staff members play a valued and essential role in supporting our boarders, as teachers, houseparents, maintenance and cleaning staff, and boarding tutors, amongst other roles. This appendix establishes clear boundaries regarding their movements within the boarding facilities and environment. These measures are in place to protect the privacy and safety of all boarders and staff.

We are an equal opportunity employer, committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment where both male and female staff are valued members of our boarding team. However, as we operate within the unique setting of an all-girls boarding house, we recognise the importance of ensuring the safety, privacy, and comfort of all our staff and pupils. Therefore, we carefully consider these factors when outlining the conditions and expectations of staff roles in our unique setting.

The Mount School is dedicated to fostering a safe, comfortable, and respectful environment for all students and staff. By adhering to this appendix, male and female staff members contribute significantly and holistically to the well-being and safety of our boarding community. All staff are expected to uphold these guidelines to ensure the highest standards of care and protection for our students.

### **Guidelines for Male Staff in Boarding**

#### **Access to Girls' Bedrooms**

Male and female members of staff are often required to work in and around the boarding house, and primarily base themselves in the boarding office, kitchens, or college lounge. Male staff members are prohibited from entering girls' bedrooms alone at all times. They may enter bedrooms as required only when they are accompanied by a female member of staff and following normal procedure to knock loudly, announce themselves loudly and clearly, and seek permission to enter before opening the door slowly. This measure is in place to protect the privacy and comfort of all boarding students and staff.

#### **Non-Residential Male Staff and Male Staff Visitors to Staff Accommodation Within the Boarding House**

Non-residential male members of staff and male staff visitors to the boarding house are not permitted to move freely throughout the boarding house unless accompanied by a female member of staff. It is a reasonable expectation that residential male members of staff working in boarding will move throughout the boarding house corridors, as they are required to access their own accommodation by passing through the boarding house. Boarders must be aware of this, and ensure they are appropriately clothed as they move around the house, for instance between their rooms and bathrooms.

## **Exceptions**

In emergencies where a female member of staff is not available or present for any reason, male staff may enter girls' bedrooms alone, only if:

- A student is in immediate danger or at serious risk of harm.
- Staff intervention is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of the student.

In such cases, the male staff member must document the incident as soon as possible, detailing the nature of the emergency and the actions taken, and report this as soon as possible to the Head of Boarding and DSL.

Male members of staff, primarily maintenance and domestic staff sometimes require access to dormitories to undertake repair work, usually and wherever possible during school hours and outside of boarding time. When such access is required, boarding staff will ensure that rooms are clearly marked if there are any boarders unwell or present in the house during the school day. Boarding and Health Centre staff will ensure the exceptional presence of girls in the house during the school day is communicated. Maintenance and domestic staff will follow the usual procedure before entering any room in the boarding house: knock loudly, announce themselves loudly and clearly, and seek permission to enter before opening the door slowly. They will not attempt to enter a room where a boarder is unwell or resting without a female member of staff present.

## **Training and Awareness**

All male and female staff working in boarding will receive training on safeguarding, boundaries, and the specific protocols related to this policy. Regular refreshers will be provided to ensure that all staff remain aware of their responsibilities. This policy will also be shared with the boarders in their induction process, so that they also understand and respect these boundaries.

All male and female staff working in boarding in any capacity will sign off on this appendix annually.