

## STATEMENT OF BOARDING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

Cobham Hall aims to provide a high standard of pastoral care through a well-established boarding system which aims to provide a warm, secure, friendly and family style environment for boarders.

The following aims are intended to ensure that boarders at Cobham Hall are confident, open-minded people who can develop a strong sense of community in a multicultural setting. A pro-active approach to life in the community is encouraged and sensitivity to others, leadership and independence are fostered. At Cobham Hall we adhere to the National Minimum Boarding Standards and fully observe Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022.

### *PRINCIPLE 1 - TO PROVIDE A SAFE BOARDING ENVIRONMENT*

**Cobham Hall recognises that it is of paramount importance for boarders to live and work in a safe environment.** All boarding staff adhere to safeguarding policies and KCSIE (2022).

#### **PRACTICE:**

Everybody within the community is encouraged to report any issues relating to Health and Safety without delay and there are procedures in place allowing them to do so.

- A Health and Safety committee representing all areas of school life meets termly. The Director of Boarding sits on this committee.
- The Chairman of the committee reports all matters raised to the Governing Body termly.
- An external Health and Safety audit is carried out annually. A full fire risk assessment is also carried out annually.
- Systems are in place to ensure the House staff know the whereabouts of the boarders at all times. A signing out and in book is used in Bligh and an 'in/out' board in Brooke, together with a checking out system, to enable anyone on duty to know where any boarder is at any time.
- House Staff use a checking out form to record pupil outings off the school premises, with whom and where they have gone. This is used of an evening (Brooke) and at the week-end [Checking out of school sheet.docx](#)
- Log books are used to record week-end plans and the register is updated accordingly.
- A security alarm is active on the door overnight in Brooke and Bligh House.
- Housemistresses check rooms daily and complete a Checklist for every room. A regular maintenance is completed as necessary. Each house has a risk assessment and procedures to follow.
- Boarding Houses register boarders every day first thing in the morning /at breakfast, after school at 4:30, and a final register at lights out. There is also a formal roll call every evening at 9pm. On Monday to Thursday a register is also taken at prep at 6.30pm for Bligh boarders in Years 7 – 10.
- A weekend register is taken throughout the day according to activities and trips.
- On trips, pupils are registered during the trip as well as at the start and end.
- A termly fire practice takes place to ensure that all students know how to evacuate the building at night. This takes place during 'boarding time', such as late at night or early in the morning.
- Boarding staff book taxis for all students using the recommended company. Student cannot organise taxis themselves.
- A list of mobile telephone numbers of students are kept by boarding staff to enable contact if necessary. Boarders also communicate with staff using Teams chat.
- Process for take away nights is clear and managed by house staff.

## ***PRINCIPLE 2 - TO PROVIDE A FAMILY STYLE ENVIRONMENT***

**Cobham Hall strongly believes that each individual is best able to develop successfully within a happy family style environment. Each boarding house functions as a closely-knit family style unit making its unique contribution to the whole school community.**

### **PRACTICE:**

- Boarders celebrate events such as birthdays, religious festivals and holidays and have parties in their houses.
- Housemistresses personalise common rooms with photographs and other items to create a homely atmosphere.
- Students are encouraged to put posters and photographs on the notice boards in their bedrooms. Boarders can use bedding provided by the school or their own bedding. They are encouraged to bring in toys and belongings to personalise their areas. All boarders are fully involved in choosing items for their bedroom including colour and style when rooms are refurbished. At the start of the autumn term there is a trip to IKEA to enable boarders to purchase items for their rooms.
- Students are encouraged to contact parents regularly by telephone and electronic means such as Facetime using the school Wi-Fi.
- There are weekly activities and meetings organised for students in each boarding house – see school calendar and wellbeing programme.

## ***PRINCIPLE 3 - TO FOSTER COMMUNITY SPIRIT***

**The aim is to nurture a sense of community within the school. Students are encouraged to empathise with others, demonstrating this through their concern for the welfare of their peers and their willingness to help.**

### **PRACTICE:**

- Regular weekly boarding meetings give opportunities for all boarders to express their opinions and concerns with Housemistresses, and the Director of Boarding sometimes attends these meetings.
- Elected Heads of Houses meet with the Director of Boarding every half term to raise any issues and discuss ideas with her. In the sixth form issues are raised at House meetings.
- Significant changes in a boarding house are openly discussed or explained to students before they are put in place.
- A number of students take part in preparation for house events and activities. For example, they organise birthday parties and dinner evenings in which they prepare meals for other boarders.
- Through the 'Buddy' system boarders look after new boarders who are unfamiliar with Cobham Hall.
- Students are encouraged to form a variety of friendships and those who socially struggle are given guidance on relationship building.
- Students are encouraged to participate in activities within the local community, for example, sports clubs, social service and special events.
- Students are enabled to practise their faith through the inter-faith network provided by the local community, for example, attend family celebrations of religious festivals and attend local Churches.

- Regular outings for meals enable social interaction in a variety of settings among students as well as staff.
- Older students are involved in looking after younger students e.g. helping at bedtime with lights out.

#### ***PRINCIPLE 4 - TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUAL CARE***

**An individual approach in our community is a vital part of the care provided. Each member of the community receives individual attention, thus ensuring that their particular needs are supported and their talents are developed. In this way the strengths of each student are nurtured, and they are guided to achieve their own personal goals. Our aim is to develop a well-balanced and contented person who is also caring and able to empathise with and to consider the needs of others.**

#### **PRACTICE:**

- Housemistresses know their boarders very well, regularly monitoring their physical and mental health, emotional well-being and academic progress. New students complete an induction programme.
- Housemistresses correspond with the nurse, parents, Guardians and academic staff regarding the individual needs of boarders and attend pastoral meetings. There is an open door policy for all and together with this support Housemistresses ensure the well-being of the students in their care.
- Staff from international backgrounds support individual students settle into the boarding environment by helping them with language and cultural issues. Interaction in their first language can help students to get used to a new environment and can help them to quickly overcome any problems. We have a volunteer from the Chinese community who helps our Chinese students adapt and understand the different expectations at a UK boarding School.
- Boarding staff contribute to the planning and implementation of the SDP and BDP and work hard to achieve the set outcomes.

#### ***PRINCIPLE 5 - TO PROVIDE CONTINUITY OF CARE***

**Cobham Hall provides continuity of care for each student throughout their time at the school. The majority of house staff are qualified in first aid and a qualified Nurse is on site during the academic day. Housemistresses and other staff provide ongoing and continuing care for the boarders. We aim to ensure a smooth transition from one year group to the next. Students are placed in boarding houses according to age. Our aim is to maintain and foster the girls' confidence at all times.**

#### **PRACTICE:**

- There is twenty-four hour staff presence in all houses (when open) with at least one qualified First Aider on duty.
- All relevant information is recorded in House diaries/log books, to which all duty staff refer. Longer communications are made by email in addition to this.
- At the beginning of each school year the boarders' files are handed over to the new Housemistresses if appropriate. A brief verbal report is provided on each girl highlighting relevant information about her health, behaviour, friendship problems (if any), etc.
- The Housemistresses always liaise with one another to ensure clear and consistent communication regarding students in their care. Meetings are held every week to formalise

this process. Handover of duties involve discussion and all important information is written in the house diary so that all are informed.

- Housemistresses follow medical protocols and keep the Nurse informed regarding ill students and medication. Students who are ill in house are checked regularly by the Housemistress on duty or the nurse, and a Care Plan is set up to monitor this and ensure its implementation. If students are in sick bay, Tutors and Heads of School are informed.

#### ***PRINCIPLE 6 - TO ENCOURAGE BOARDERS' INITIATIVES AND TO FOSTER THEIR LEADERSHIP QUALITIES***

**Boarders are encouraged to discover and develop their leadership qualities. They are encouraged to organise a variety of events and activities in which they can apply their leadership skills. Within each House, Heads of House and Social Officers are elected, and they take responsibility for organising some boarding events. However, initiatives generated by any boarders are welcomed and encouraged. Responsibility is also encouraged and developed amongst the whole group so that everybody has a chance to discover their own particular strengths and to develop leadership qualities.**

#### **PRACTICE:**

- The choice of weekday and weekend activities are discussed with the boarding representatives who voice the opinions of other boarders.
- Housemistresses/Housemasters ask boarders to help to prepare in-house events and activities (e.g. Brooke House Friday activity, film and music evenings, take-aways, Ready! Steady! Cook! and preparing house notice boards). Heads of House take an active role in boarding house meetings and oversee in-house events.
- Boarders are encouraged to develop and organise their own extra-curricular clubs and activities e.g. Lunar (Chinese) New Year parties.

#### ***PRINCIPLE 7 - TO RAISE CULTURAL AWARENESS***

**Being an international boarding school provides a valuable opportunity for boarders to broaden their horizons. They meet students from different cultures and enrich their experience through the generation of international friendships; sharing a room, dining together, learning about other cultures through events and trips together. Difference is celebrated and we believe that multiculturalism is fundamental to our ethos and such a living environment will enable our students to truly understand their place in the world.**

#### **PRACTICE:**

- Boarders in Bligh are allocated rooms according to age and to promote a mix of nationalities. Tolerance and understanding, as well as adaptability, are encouraged.
- Occasional themed days are organised focusing on the cuisine of different countries. The dining room is decorated with flags and other items representing the chosen country. We celebrate such events and European Languages Day and International Womens' Day.
- Boarders are made aware of various national holidays at boarding house meetings. Examples include Ramadan - all students are aware that Muslim girls are observing this period and what it involves; Christmas - girls are involved in Christmas preparations such as Christmas tree decorations, Christmas card making and writing, etc., and the Carol Service; Diwali - the Indian

- girls greet other boarders and wish them Happy Diwali; Chinese/ Lunar New Year - is celebrated by the whole school and boarders have a Chinese dinner in a decorated dining room. Assemblies are widely used by both students and staff to inform and explain aspects of different cultures, festivals and religions.
- Boarders are encouraged to visit their friends in their home countries during the holidays and to stay with day students at weekends and holiday periods.

#### ***PRINCIPLE 8 - TO PROMOTE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE***

**Cobham Hall strongly believes in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. This is promoted and encouraged through a healthy diet and a wide range of after school activities and the wellbeing programme. Boarders are taught that establishing healthy eating habits is an essential part of their growing-up and they are provided with a wide choice of healthy food at meal times.**

#### **PRACTICE:**

- All students have a choice of hot vegetarian, vegan and meat meals and a cold salad bar and meat bar.
- All houses have fruit baskets and the consumption of biscuits is monitored and limited if necessary.
- Healthy rations are ordered.
- Most week-end trips include time outside and walking. They can involve physical exercise e.g. skating, trampolining, swimming and bowling. In our grounds, we organise treasure hunts, team-building activities, games (such as rounders), water fights and picnics. Sports afternoons are also organised in school at the weekend.
- Housemistresses monitor boarders' eating habits and Housemistresses take spot checks at breakfast, lunch and supper time. Housemistresses have regular discussions with boarders about healthy eating and sensible food choices.
- Sixth Form Housemistresses monitor the food some boarders cook in the evening. Catering staff train sixth form students on food safety.
- There is a food committee organised by the Catering and Domestic Support Services Manager that boarders can attend each half term.