

Boarding Policy

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Boarding Policy

Introduction

This policy addresses the key legislation for boarding regulation as set out in the *National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools* (September 2022), *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and ISI Documentation Required for Inspections.

A major review was undertaken at SLT level in March 2018 and the amended policy approved by the Full Board of Governors in September 2018. It is scrutinised by Governors as necessary following changes to legislation or major changes to procedures.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following School documents:

- *Business Continuity Plan*
- *Complaints Policy*
- *Contractors Policy*
- *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy*
- *First Aid Policy*
- *Online Safety Policy*
- *Physical Restraint Policy*
- *Risk Policy*
- *Safeguarding Policy*
- *Searches and Confiscation Policy*
- *Security Policy*
- *Trips and Visits Policy*

Part A – Governance Leadership and Management

1. Statement of Boarding Principles and Practice

NMSB Standard 1

Aims and objectives

The aims of the School are as follows-

- Providing an education of the highest quality in which each individual can reach his or her academic potential
- Providing a “whole person” education, in which the academic, creative, physical, social and spiritual development of each pupil is promoted in a genuinely co-educational environment
- To foster an atmosphere of self-respect and care for others in which pupils are confident, fulfilled and happy
- To prepare pupils to identify and fulfil their role in society and to provide an education for life
- to work in partnership with parents, governors, staff and former pupils to achieve the School's aims.

The aims of Walbrook (the name of our boarding house) are in sympathy with these aims by

- Providing each pupil with a calm, caring, safe and supportive family atmosphere in the boarding house in which they can develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence
- Promoting mutual respect, good behaviour, responsibility, self-discipline and develop independence of action and decision-making amongst the boarding pupils
- Developing integrity, judgement, initiative, loyalty and leadership skills in the pupils.

House ethos

Freemen's offers a close-knit, supportive boarding environment where pupils work together. Small numbers ensure individual attention and personalised care, making 'Cherishing the individual' a lived experience.

2. Management and Development of Boarding

NMSB Standard 2

The effectiveness of leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision is monitored by the Headmaster and the Governor for Boarding. The Governor for Boarding visits termly and keeps in close contact with Head of Boarding.

The boarding house is led by the Head of Boarding, supported by two Deputy Houseparents, Resident Boarding Tutor, House tutors and a team of recent Graduate Assistants. The Head of Boarding sits on the Senior Leadership Team.

Pupil wellbeing is at the core of what we do. Individual assessments of pupils are made where necessary (including risk assessments) and are endorsed and supported by senior management. For the majority of boarders English is not their first language, boarding staff support them fully to ensure they are integrated into the whole school community.

Pupils are encouraged from the start of term and throughout the year to embrace the co-curricular offerings of the school. The pupils are also monitored by staff to ensure that pupils are getting the

balance correct. Welfare is at the centre of our decision-making processes and boarding staff have received training in Mental Health First Aid.

The Head of Boarding is a member of the schools Safeguarding team and a DDSL who receives training and updates regularly. He also is a member of the Pastoral Strategy Group.

The policies, documents and records noted by NMSB as required by boarding schools are all created and maintained by the School.

All policies/ documents relating to boarding, be they boarding-specific or whole-school, are in place and available for staff to access via staff or boarding SharePoint sites. Documents are updated accordingly when situations change or need to be improved as seen by boarding staff and in consultation with SLT.

3. Inclusion, Equality and Diversity

NMSB Standard 3

Freemen's is fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and boarding staff are sensitive to the needs of those with different needs, including those pupils with particular religious, dietary, language or cultural needs.

Boarders are asked to speak English in the common areas (including dining hall) to ensure that those who do not speak the same language are not excluded from activities. EAL lessons also help to support this.

Those with special educational needs are supported within the house and closely linked to academic support offered in school.

All activities planned in the house are inclusive in terms of academic and sporting ability – activities are made as inclusive as possible to encourage maximum participation.

Boarders are, through assemblies and other whole-school activities, given opportunities to share their cultural traditions with day pupils who may have limited knowledge

Different cultural festivals are celebrated within the house to ensure full inclusion – fasting during Ramadan for example is accommodated for.

Part B: Boarding Provision

4. Boarding Accommodation

NMSB Standard 4

We are very fortunate to have a modern boarding facility at Freeman's, and great care is taken by boarding staff and the maintenance team to ensure that the accommodation is safe, suitable, comfortable and well-maintained. This is subject to a written and ongoing risk assessment.

All boarders either have their own room or one which is shared with a maximum of two other people; the arrangements in place give boarders appropriate levels of privacy based on their sex, age and other requirements, with reasonable adjustments made for any boarders with disabilities. The quality of the sleeping accommodation is good; bedding is warm, clean and comfortable, and rooms are well furnished with fixtures and fittings of a good quality.

When issues arise with sleeping accommodation, boarders can report this swiftly and it is dealt with as fast as possible. Rooms are separated by gender and doors are locked and alarmed at night to prevent potential movement between the sides of the house. If pupils are unhappy with their roommate, accommodations can be made and students are free to express who they wish to share rooms with. Living accommodation is of a good quality with a variety of spaces that the students can make use of. Internet access is consistent across the house and students can request for certain sites to be accessible as needed for their studies and social time (where appropriate). Our online safety approach is in line with the rest of the school and with the School's *Online Safety Policy*.

Toilet and washing facilities, including hot water, are available in all sleep pods and cleanliness is maintained by cleaning staff. If there are problems, pupils know the chain of reporting and problems are dealt with quickly. Toilet facilities are separate for boys and girls.

There is highly satisfactory lighting throughout the house and boarders can easily ventilate their rooms when necessary (and are encouraged to do so). Cleaning staff are present in the house every day and maintain overall tidiness.

The boarding house is well furnished in a variety of ways to accommodate the needs of all pupils. Staff accommodation is clearly separated from the rest of the house, behind lockable doors with pupil access strictly limited.

All boarders have a notice board in their room which they are free to decorate as they wish. Other additions such as plants, lighting and decorations/ personal items can also be added.

All boarding accommodation is kept strictly for boarders. Day pupils may visit the house but must remain in the communal hub area and sign in and out. Similarly, access to sleeping pods is also gender-specific. All access to boarding house by non-boarders/ non-school staff is supervised, with record kept of visitors.

CCTV cameras are placed in communal locations to monitor activity and departures and arrivals to the house. There is no camera access with any view of pupils' rooms or inside the sleeping pods. No biometric system is used. The house is secured from unauthorised users by way of a keypad on the boarders' entrance and a fob system on the visitors' entrance. An intruder alarm is activated at night. Further details of how we prevent unauthorised access to Walbrook can be found in our *Security Policy* and our *Contractors Policy*.

5. Boarders' Possessions

NMSB Standard 5

Our laundry provision is good; laundry is cleaned within Walbrook at regular times during the week. In addition the boarders may use the small domestic machines in Walbrook at designated times during the day.

Boarders have daily access to shops where they can obtain necessary personal and stationery items.

We realise the importance of providing good protection for boarders' personal possessions and money. Boarders may use the lockable drawers in their rooms to store valuables. There is also a safe in the boarding office which can be used in exceptional circumstances to store boarders' possessions. A maximum of £50 cash should be kept by each boarder at any one time. Parents are requested to ensure that sensible spending limits are set on any debit / credit cards owned by boarders.

If it is deemed necessary to search a boarder's personal belongings, the School's *Searches and Confiscation Policy*, which meets the requirements of section 550ZA of the Education Act 1996, will be followed.

6. Provision and Preparation of Food and Drinks

NMSB Standard 6

All meals are provided by the Freeman's catering providers, who will cater for those with special dietary, medical or religious needs. The pupils are served in the main school dining room which is a short walk from the accommodation. Good quality catering facilities ensure that meals are prepared, served and consumed hygienically.

The catering team meet regularly with the boarders to ensure that meals are of a good standard in terms of nutrition, quantity, quality, choice and variety, and meets the boarders' tastes.

In addition, there are two kitchens in the house which provide opportunities for boarders to prepare snacks and drinks at certain times during the day.

Drinking water is available in every bedroom and kitchen as well as the water dispenser in the main hub. Pupils also have access to kitchens where they can prepare meals should they wish to. When needed pupils can be allowed more freedom to use these kitchens.

Part C: Health and Wellbeing

7. Boarders' Health and Wellbeing

NMSB Standard 7

The health and well-being of the boarders is given very high priority at Freeman's, with prompt action taken when health concerns are identified. Most boarding staff have a valid First Aid training certificate; all are trained to give out limited medication from the boarding office. Staff are trained in

specific conditions and disabilities of pupils in the house. The well-being of boarders is discussed as a regular agenda item in the weekly boarding house staff meetings.

Medicines are stored in the boarding office safely and securely and a record of administration is kept on boarding software accessible only by those who need to know. The controlled drug book is kept in a locked office.

During the school day, boarders' medical provision is provided by the School Medical Centre, supported by the boarding staff on duty. Between them a decision is made on a case-by-case basis whether a pupil must remain with the Medical Centre during the day, or whether they may rest in their own rooms. Pupils may make appointments, either through the staff office or privately to see the Counsellor, who is independent of the School staff group.

There are two isolation rooms available in the boarding house for boarders who require them; in common with other rooms, they offer high quality accommodation with appropriate privacy and toilet/washing facilities.

All boarders are given the opportunity to register with the local GP and are able to make appointments as necessary. Appointments might also be made by boarding staff or medical centre staff where appropriate, with the Head of Boarding assuming ultimate responsibility for ensuring that necessary appointments are booked.

Boarders requiring prescription medication should store their medicine in the boarding office. Older pupils might be allowed to self-medicate in certain situations and boarding and medical staff will keep a record of this agreement.

More detail about providing boarders with medication can be found in the *School's First Aid Policy*.

Other medical services such as dentist, optometrist and specialist services can be booked privately and the School will assist in this where required. Details of these services, and services reflecting well-being and mental health can be found in Walbrook.

The importance of sleep, healthy eating and a positive work life balance is regularly stressed to boarders. When concerns are raised about a specific pupil, staff will discuss this with them and try to support them in making healthy decisions. Mental health and wellbeing boards are displayed in house.

Freemen's prioritises the health and well-being of all boarders, ensuring that any disclosure of a mental health concern is taken seriously and handled with confidentiality, following safeguarding guidelines. The school will work closely with the pupil, parents/guardians, and medical professionals to determine the best course of action to support the pupil's well-being. If a boarder requires additional support beyond what can be provided in the boarding environment, appropriate action will be taken to ensure their safety, which may include temporarily stepping away from boarding. A pupil will only be permitted to return to boarding when a qualified mental health or medical practitioner confirms that it is safe for them to do so. During their time away, the school will maintain regular contact with the pupil and their family to provide support and ensure a smooth reintegration. On their return, a support plan will be put in place to ensure their well-being is

prioritised, with any necessary adjustments made. Boarding staff are trained in mental health awareness and will always act in the best interests of the pupil, ensuring that safeguarding measures and pastoral care remain a priority.

Part D: Safeguarding

8. Safeguarding

NMSB Standard 8

Freemen's complies with all the guidance set out in the current versions of Department of Education documents *Keeping Children Safe in Education* and *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. We recognise the increased potential for child-on-child abuse in a boarding house given that some children share overnight accommodation. We have a clear policy that sexual relationships between pupils are forbidden, and this is clearly communicated to boarders.

New staff receive safeguarding training, and boarding staff receive termly updates tailored to residential settings, addressing unique risks such as overnight supervision, peer relationships, and online safety

Pupils are not permitted to use VPNs which might allow them to bypass the School's internet safeguards. Pupils caught using VPN will be sanctioned as indicated in the School's Behaviour and IT Usage Policies. The School's Smoothwall software can block students from accessing inappropriate content. Smoothwall notifications are shared with boarding staff and addressed with the pupil directly where needed to check on their wellbeing.

All staff are aware of the different safeguarding considerations to be made in a boarding context and if they are unsure are encouraged to ask members of safeguarding team who are in the boarding house.

Pupils are made aware of policies at the start of the year and what is expected of them. Pupils in U4 and L5 hand in their personal devices at night – they retain their school iPads which are subject to Wi-Fi filters and the Wi-Fi shuts down for pupils at 11pm to support safe and healthy internet usage. This reinforcement of healthy screen time will ensure students get adequate rest.

Part E: Health and Safety

9. Safety of Boarders

NMSB Standard 9

The safety of pupils in the School is of paramount importance. Walbrook is covered by the School's Health and Safety Policy, with boarding staff receiving sufficient training for them to understand how the Policy is to be implemented in Walbrook. The boarding staff communicate with the Maintenance team to ensure that the safety and welfare of the pupils is safeguarded and promoted at all times.

Boarding accommodation is regularly inspected from a health and safety perspective. If pupils are

concerned about something they are made aware of who to report that to.

Regular written risk assessments are undertaken in relation to all in house/ in school activities as well as within the house itself. These risk assessments are reviewed and revisited where necessary in line with our *Risk Policy*.

Contingency measures for needing to re-house boarders following a major incident can be found in our *Business Continuity Policy*.

For all activities where boarders are taken off site risk assessments are completed and shared with staff. Appropriate ratios of staff to pupils are always maintained. A third person is always on duty at weekends to ensure appropriate staffing is maintained in the house. More details on boarders' trips can be found in the School's *Trips and Visits Policy*.

10. Fire Precautions and Drills

NMSB Standard 10

Freemen's complies with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, including maintaining evacuation plans for all children subject to their needs. New boarders receive a fire safety induction on arrival, including a guided walkthrough of evacuation routes and procedures.

Fire drills are carried out during boarding hours at least once per half term, with at least one drill per year carried out overnight.

The fire evacuation procedure is shared with boarders at the start of the school year and is reiterated at regular intervals so that they know what to do and be evacuated safely. Flexi-boarders are also made aware.

Alerting systems in the house are all accessible- they are located in sleeping and communal areas to allow for swift notification of fire.

Part F: Boarders' rights, advocacy and complaints.

11. Boarders' Induction and Individual Support

NMSB Standard 11

Before arrival at Freeman's, new boarders and their parents are sent an electronic version of the A-Z guide to boarding (House handbook) and details of what to expect on the first day. New boarders arrive in School before other boarders and are introduced to key members of staff. There is a programme of induction activities including information about general rules and regulations, fire procedures, tours of the school and plenty of opportunities to ask questions. Throughout the first term there are a number of 'clinics' running, where new boarders can hear presentations and ask questions relating to induction topics such as opening bank accounts, registering for travel cards and much more.

New boarders are assigned 'buddies' who will help and support them through the first few days or weeks at School. New boarders will be introduced to their Pod prefect within the first few days at School, who will also help to answer any questions they may have. Pupils will also have weekly check-in chats with a member of the Boarding team.

There is a range of staff to whom a boarder can turn for guidance, including the Head of Boarding, residential staff, non-residential boarding tutors, teachers, medical staff and counsellors. Information is also provided regarding services that pupils can access outside of School, such as Childline, the Children's Commissioner Help at Hand Service, counselling and medical services.

The children are made aware of the independent person, Lucy Douglas, and how to contact her during and outside of school.

There are clear arrangements in place for who is responsible for the collection and transport of boarders at the beginning and end of terms and in the case of any temporary absence. These arrangements are clearly communicated to parents and guardians.

We currently do not have any boarders who require advocacy services. However, should such pupils enrol at Freeman's, we shall ensure that they are provided with appropriate advocacy support and are made aware of the services available.

12. Contact with Parents/Carers

NMSB Standard 12

The vast majority of boarders will use mobile telephones and electronic devices to contact parents/carers. Many will choose to do this in their rooms, but there is a private telephone box available for use. Boarders may also use the Walbrook office if required. Boarders who are unable to use their own phones may request to use the boarding house landline in exceptional circumstances. The routine in the house enables boarders to make contact with parents and families who are in different time zones.

13. Securing Boarders' Views

NMSB Standard 13

A Boarders' Survey is undertaken each year in which boarders are asked to contribute views and opinions. In addition, there are committees formed within the house in order to obtain boarders' views on individual topics, such as catering. Boarding staff regularly encourage boarders to share their views using a counter voting system, and there is a confidential suggestions box where pupils might place notes for boarding staff.

Boarders should never feel uncomfortable or unwilling to raise a complaint or express their views to boarding staff.

In addition, there are two places each on Upper School Council and Sixth Form Council reserved for boarders and elected by their fellow boarders. This enables boarders' views to be represented at whole-school level.

The prefect and head of house system is designed to facilitate specific concerns being raised in different areas with a clear chain of reporting to all pupils – prominently displayed posters show photos of prefects and heads of house. Prefects are from multiple year groups, allowing for a wide spectrum of views to be shared and considered.

14. Complaints

NMSB Standard 14

Parental complaints pertaining to boarding fall under the scope of the School's *Complaints Policy*.

Similar to boarders' sharing their views, boarders' complaints can also be shared in a variety of ways – the suggestion box, speaking to staff, prefects, heads of house, and staff outside of the boarding environment. Any complaints are logged and addressed, with pupils kept aware of what is happening.

The Head of Boarding keeps records of complaints and action taken which is shared with boarding staff where appropriate via weekly meetings. A schoollog is also kept of any significant complaints made so they can be referred back to, as well as to spot patterns and then to respond accordingly.

Part G: Promoting positive behaviour and relationships

15. Promoting Positive Behaviour

NMSB Standard 15

The School rules promote good behaviour amongst pupils. In addition, the Boarding House A-Z guide contains further details of rules specific to boarding.

The whole-school Behaviour Policy is applied to the boarding setting consistently. Pupils are aware of the policies from joining the school and it is reaffirmed in terms of expectations in boarding at induction and throughout the year. The rewards and consequences of the school can apply in a boarding context, and boarders are aware of other rewards and consequences such as 'gating' win which a pupil will not be permitted to leave the school grounds for a period of time. All sanctions are applied fairly and consistently. In terms of searches and restraint, the School's *Searches Policy* and *Physical Restraint Policy* apply to boarders and the boarding house. Boarders can have prohibited items confiscated from their room if found – this list is made clear to them at the start of the year and reiterated throughout.

All these policies are accessible to parents and carers via the school website and for staff via SharePoint. Staff are required to understand these policies and their implementation.

16. Preventing Bullying

NMSB Standard 16

The School's Anti-bullying Policy, which seeks to prevent bullying so far as is reasonably practicable, applies equally to day and boarding contexts. Boarding staff are aware of the increased potential for offline bullying in a boarding house given that victims cannot escape someone who is bullying them

by going home. They are accordingly especially vigilant for any signs of bullying and receive training in how to spot those signs.

Pupils know who they can report incidents to in the house and is supported by safeguarding posters throughout pods. Boarding staff have strong links with form tutors, heads of year and heads of section to create a cohesive approach to bullying incidents.

Any bullying incidents are recorded via Orah and any follow up action is added, with the Head of Boarding and the Deputy Head always informed. Staff are made aware of incidents where appropriate via weekly meetings and methods of providing collaborative support to pupils are discussed.

Steps are taken to ensure that potential online bullying is addressed through handing in devices and WiFi restrictions after 11pm. If issues arise within a room, staff will work with pupils to encourage them to address issues themselves but will step in for to resolve any bullying behaviour.

17. Promoting Good Relationships

NMSB Standard 17

Boarders are able to develop good relationships with fellow pupils and staff. Boarders receive education on sex and relationships through their timetabled PSHE lessons.

Boarders are given some extra PSHE education in Walbrook in addition to their timetabled PSHE lessons, much of it in the boarders' induction programme.

Boarding pupils are actively encouraged to make friendships with day pupils and are supported in doing so. Where students are struggling to do this, intervention is provided through boarding staff, form tutors and heads of year.

Part H: Boarders' Development

18. Activities and Free Time

NMSB Standard 18

There is a whole school co-curricular activities programme in which boarders are encouraged to participate.

In addition, boarders have access to the Freeman's sports and music facilities in boarding hours and at weekends at the discretion of the member of staff on duty.

Boarders are permitted to visit Ashted village after school hours during the week, and permitted to visit Epsom and Leatherhead towns at weekends, with appropriate permissions from staff members and parents/guardians.

Boarders are able to use their devices to access news articles and information about events in the world outside the School.

Discretion will be used in the case of pupils with particular religious, dietary, language or cultural

needs.

Part I: Staffing, guardians and prefects

19. Staff Recruitment and checks on Other Adults

NMSB Standard 19

Freemen's complies with the guidance set out in current versions of the Department for Education documents *Keeping children safe in education* and *Working Together to Safeguard Children* with regard to safer recruitment checks on all staff.

All staff, including ancillary and contract staff, living and working in Walbrook have an enhanced DBS check held by the School. All contractors working in Walbrook are accompanied regardless of whether they have DBS clearance. The sponsor is to inform the Walbrook duty member of staff in advance of a visit and then that contractor is to report to the member of staff on arrival at Walbrook. The duty member of staff will then be responsible for them until they leave Walbrook. The sponsor is then responsible for them. During weekend hours, the security guard can escort the contractor to Walbrook and then collect them again.

There is a written agreement held by the School between any adults not employed by the School but living on site specifying terms and guidance.

Visitors to the house are welcome, but are required to sign in using the visitor's book and must remain under supervision of the member of staff on duty. They will be required to wear visitor passes if they are moving about the School and, as with all visitors, accompanied by a member of staff.

Guardianship arrangements are made by the individual pupil and not by the school. The suitability of arrangements is monitored by the Head of Boarding and the admissions team.

20. Staffing and Supervision

NMSB Standard 20

Staff working in Walbrook have job descriptions reflecting their duties. There is annual induction training in September for new staff. All boarding staff are encouraged and supported with opportunities for CPL in boarding.

Pupils and their parents are made aware of spouses and family members living onsite at the start of term.

There is a minimum of two members of staff on duty in Walbrook after teaching hours and duty staff are identified to boarders each day. At least two members of staff remain in the boarding house and on duty overnight each night and keep the house mobile telephone with them at all times. Boarders can contact duty staff overnight either by using the house mobile telephone, or by using door bells provided for staff accommodation.

Staff accommodation is suitably located so as to avoid any opportunity for inappropriate favouritism or one-to-one contacts between staff and boarders.

All residential staff accommodation comprises living and sleeping accommodation and toilet and washing facilities separate from those used by boarders. Accommodation for non-residential staff undertaking an overnight duty comprises sleeping accommodation, toilet and washing facilities separate from those used by boarders.

An effective signing in and out system, and exit approval system, ensures that staff know the whereabouts of boarders at all times.

The policy and procedures for a missing boarder are clearly displayed in the boarding staff office and staff are aware of their obligations.

21. Prefects

NMSB Standard 21

Walbrook has a system of prefects within the community. Prefects are given specific duties and responsibilities and meet regularly with the Head of Boarding to discuss their role and the running of the house. Prefects are not just appointed from the Sixth Form; instead, the leadership group is made up of pupils from all parts of the community. These prefects are selected after a process of application and review by boarding staff. The views of the boarders may also be taken into consideration when appointing prefects each year.

22. Educational Guardians

NMSB Standard 22

Boarders are responsible for appointing guardians and the School does not make any individual recommendations for guardianship arrangements. Boarders are advised- but not required- to use guardians registered with The Association for the Education and Guardianship for International Students (AEGIS).

Guardians are engaged with school notices and are informed of events which promote the welfare, physical wellbeing and emotional wellbeing of the boarder.

Part J: Children accommodated offsite

23. Lodgings and Host Families

NMSB Standard 23

The School does not make any lodgings or hosting arrangements for pupils. Boarders' parents are responsible for appointing guardians and the School does not make any individual recommendations for guardianship arrangements.

The School alerts Surrey Fostering Service immediately it becomes aware of any private fostering arrangements involving any Freeman's pupil.