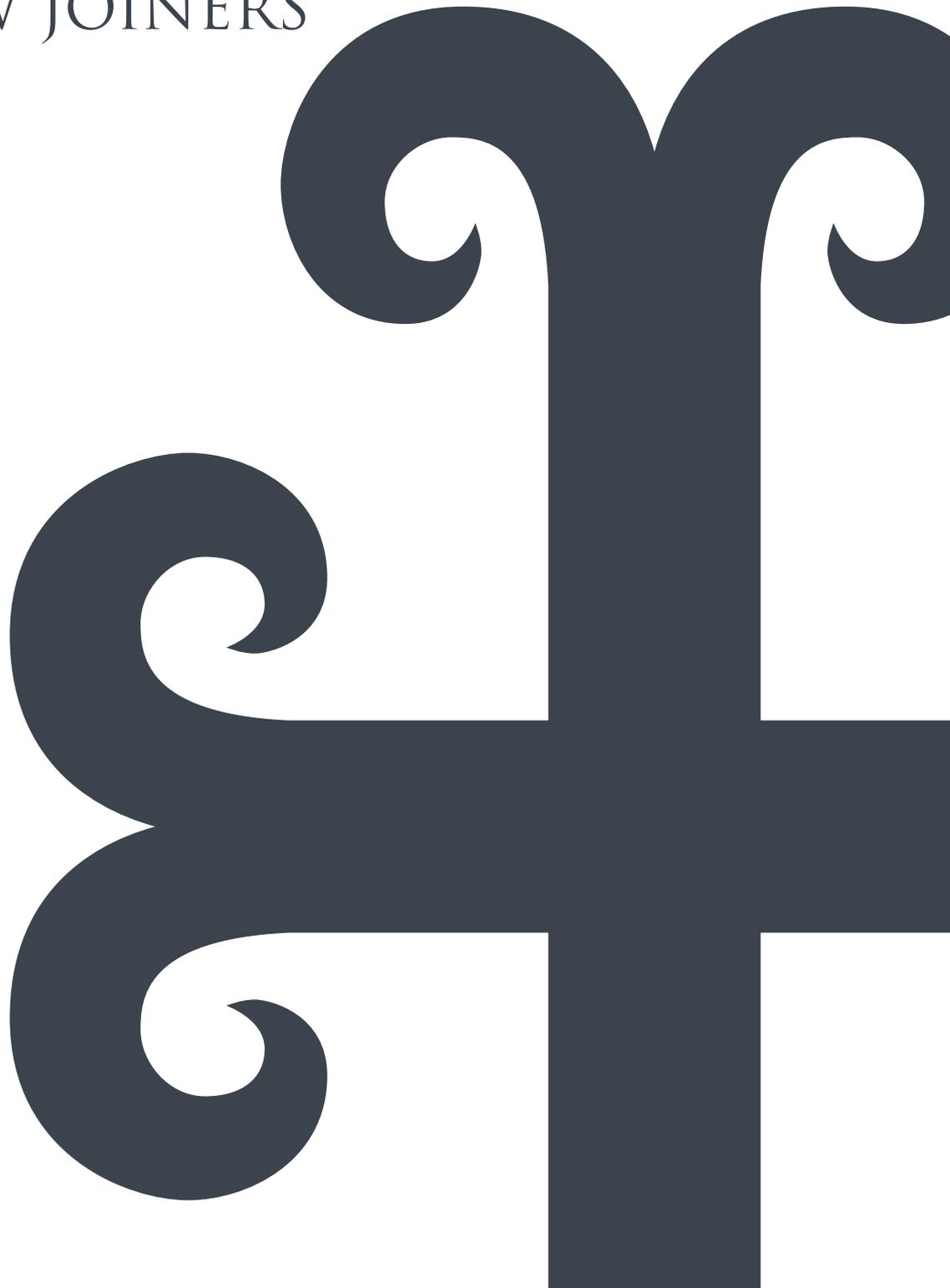


 DOWNSIDE SCHOOL

# COVID-SAFE INFORMATION FOR NEW JOINERS





The potential reopening of schools in the UK in September brings with it a number of challenges both in terms of the operation of the Schools themselves but more importantly in the safety of the children placed in our care by you. At Downside we have adopted the **Boarding Schools Association COVID SAFE CHARTER** and adheres to all the guidelines issued by the UK Department of Education and Public Health England.

The following outlines how we intend on ensuring your child remains in a safe environment where they can flourish as part of the Downside community. We have adopted a number of measures here that exceed the current UK guidelines, learning from our colleagues in other parts of the world where they have faced similar challenges to Covid-19. This is not an exhaustive list and the risk assessments are dynamic and will reflect the changing guidelines. We are constantly revisiting the plans for September; however, we hope it answers many of the questions you as parents will have regarding the return of your children to school in September.

#### **PRIOR TO THE START OF TERM AND TRAVELLING TO SCHOOL**

- The School will undergo a complete thorough clean.
- Boarding accommodation and classrooms, the refectory, sports facilities and recreation areas will be arranged and clearly marked to indicate social distancing and safe movement around the buildings. Procedures will be clearly displayed around the School and there will be hand washing facilities and hand sanitiser stations set up.
- Staff will have had training on social distancing measures, new procedures and the care and management of pupils.
- There will be an induction programme for new pupils and families conducted online so that new pupils and parents are able to speak to key members of staff, such as the tutor and House Master or House Mistress.
- All families will be provided with written information explaining procedures and arrangements for arrival.
- International pupils and parents will have emergency contact details, including a 24 hour out-of-hours service while pupils are travelling. All international pupils will receive a letter on school-headed paper confirming arrangements in line with sponsor requirements.
- The School will offer the opportunity for a 14-day quarantine period for international pupils prior to the start of term if required.
- Any school transport will be risk assessed so that pupils and staff adhere to social distancing rules and that the transport is clean and organised according to safety guidelines.
- The school shop will arrange for uniform and school related items to be delivered to the boarding house.
- Guardians will receive a list of expectations of the roles of guardians.

## AT SCHOOL

- Boarding houses will be arranged in 'household' zones according to house and year group and pupils will have clear instructions as to which areas they have access to, including sleeping accommodation, bathrooms, kitchens and recreational space. Clear protocols will be in place and signage in each area. Laundry and cleaning procedures will be made clear and safe for staff and pupils.
- Pupils will be briefed on the new procedures and measures in place in addition to receiving written guidance at the start of term.
- A fire drill will take place which will take into account social distancing measures.
- If pupils or staff wish to wear face masks or coverings, they will be permitted to do so (other than for activities where this is not advised such as strenuous exercise).
- The procedures in the refectory will follow guidance about social distancing, hand hygiene and food service. New dining areas will allow for social distancing and mealtimes staggered.
- The timetable will reflect changes in procedures throughout the rest of the School and will provide the same academic support for pupils unable to physically attend school as those who can.
- Provision will be made for sports and activities where social distancing guidelines will be adhered to and any use of equipment thoroughly cleaned.
- Subjects where pupils use equipment, such as design and technology, will be risk assessed and procedures put in place to ensure appropriate hygiene measures.
- Movement around the School will be minimised and one-way systems in place.
- Equipment will not be shared between pupils and will be clearly labelled. The School shop will stock plastic wallets for personal items such as pens and calculators as well as hand sanitiser.
- The Health Centre will be run on an appointment system. Health Centre staff will be trained on caring for potential Covid-19 cases and will work to the guidance issued by Public Health England. There will be an isolated zone in the health centre for receiving and treating pupils with suspected symptoms which is separate to the rest of the Health Centre and has a different entrance. Staff will have full PPE (personal protective equipment) and will conduct temperature checks when necessary. When possible, parents of pupils with symptoms will be asked to collect them from school. Where this is not possible, the School will make provision for isolation and/or quarantine as required.

- Recreational areas and zones inside and outside the buildings will be marked for different 'household' groups.
- Pastoral support will be provided for all pupils and staff with the opportunity to raise concerns. There will be measures in place to ensure pupil wellbeing and special arrangements made for pupils who need particular support.
- Pupils will be made clear of the bullying policy and that any bullying, related to the pandemic or otherwise, will not be tolerated. Please see the FAQs.
- Day pupils will have procedures for entering the School, including changing into school uniform and handwashing. Parents of day pupils will be provided with guidelines to allow safe access to and from school and will follow Public Health England guidelines on isolation and quarantine.
- Visitors will not be permitted into the school buildings unless in exceptional circumstances, with agreement with the Head Master. Anyone on site will adhere to the protocols in place.

## EXEATS AND LEAVING SCHOOL

- The School will make provision for international pupils requiring accommodation and supervision over the school Exeats. This will also be available for UK pupils unable to go home if a family are shielding or a member of the household has symptoms.
- Boarders will be discouraged from going home during term time, except in special circumstances.
- Protocols will be in place for transporting luggage and personal effects into and out of school.

## FAQS

### 1. What social distancing measures will be taken if the School goes back in September?

Pupils will be in year group households within their houses. Corridors will be one way and there will be a limit to the number of pupils in a class. The refectory will be run in sittings with each household being able to eat together. Social distancing will apply to all areas of school life e.g. activities, sport.

### 2. Will students be required to wear masks during school-time? Will there be sufficient access to hand sanitiser within the School?

Unless government guidance changes students will not be forced to wear masks however they have the choice to wear them if they feel it is appropriate. Handwashing areas will be available and where these are not available hand sanitiser will be provided.

### 3. What plans do you have in place if students are required to self-isolate when arriving in September?

Downside is lucky to have a dedicated Health Centre with registered nurses available. We have excellent facilities for pupils to self-isolate within the school grounds.

### 4. What will happen if schools are required to close in the midst of next academic year due to another outbreak of Covid-19 in the UK?

We will follow, as always, both UK government and BSA guidance on the safe running of the School. We have an excellent remote learning programme which we have used during this disruption to our year that will help maintain the Downside community.

### 5. Will Visas be processed on time?

Yes, we work closely with Newland Chase (formerly the Taylor partnership) to ensure all Visas are ready in time.

### 6. What is the contingency plan for teaching if the School is unable to open in September?

Downside has a remote learning programme that will allow all pupils to maintain an excellent level of access to both face to face teaching, webinars and independent study tasks.

### 7. How will the School ensure there is no bullying linked to Covid-19?

Downside has a very strong culture of support in its community and the issues surrounding Covid-19 will be discussed in tutor groups and houses and addressed through the Personal, Social, Moral and Economic Education programme. On the rare occasions where bullying may happen, we have strong systems in place to deal with it quickly. Downside does not tolerate bullying or discrimination in any form.

### 8. With a view to combating the Covid-19 situation, whether the School will cancel the exeat and half term and outing/fixtures/visits for boarders during weekend?

The School will follow both the UK government and BSA guidance on what is allowed in terms of outings at the weekends and regarding our sports fixture programme. We are working with other local Independent Schools to ensure when we are allowed to resume these activities, we are ready to do so. On Exeat and Half Terms, we will ensure we provide an option of provision on site for pupils.

## SCHOOL FACILITIES, ACADEMIC AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

### 1. How many Y9 boarders will share a room? Will each of them have his/her own desk in his room?

Some boarders will share a room, but we are taking social distancing measures into account in all aspects of boarding. Every child will have access to their own work area and desk.

### 2. What indoor sports facilities are available in the School?

We have a large gymnasium for basketball, netball, badminton, cricket and 5-a-side football; a gym with free weights and cardio equipment; squash courts and a multipurpose gym space where we can undertake table tennis, archery, fencing as well as keep fit classes and athlete development programmes.

### 3. How many students and percentage of GCSE students would continue to study A-level in the School?

We have between 60 and 70 students entering the Lower Sixth Form each year. 92% of students continue their studies each year.

### 4. What is the class size for Y9 and above, and the ratio of teacher to students?

Class sizes vary between very small numbers for specialised courses to core subjects. We aim for a maximum class size of 20 in Years 9-11, and 16 in Years 12-13, and no class in Years 9-11 exceeds 24. The average for Years 9-11 is 24.

### 5. Will each student be assigned a personal tutor to help them cope with their academic and emotional situations?

We have an excellent tutorial system where pupils can meet regularly with them to help support their academic and emotional wellbeing. These tutors work both in the classrooms and the boarding houses helping support prep and social activities.

### 6. Is it mandatory for the students to participate in at least one co-curricular activity?

At Downside we have a wide range of co-curricular activities with over 100 different clubs and groups meeting on a weekly basis. There is something for everyone to be able to participate in and if it does not exist already, we can do our best to accommodate it. There is a dedicated activity slot each week where all pupils take part in a service activity to support the community as well as regular games sessions. These are the only mandatory activities.

### 7. Is it mandatory for the boarders to leave at exeat and half term? Will the School consider allowing them to stay in their boarding houses?

Downside is developing plans for allowing pupils to remain at school over Exeats and Half Terms.

### **8. What are the requirements of being a guardian?**

Information on guardians is available in your digital joining pack. When you enrol at the School, you will have access to this via the Parent Portal.

### **9. How can the School safeguard the boarders will not use their electronic devices like mobile phones, iPad, notebooks etc at night time?**

Each year group has a policy associated with handing in electronic devices at night. This depends on the level of maturity of the pupils. In some cases, it is important for the pupils to be able to have access outside of these times to allow the pupils to contact family in different time zones. The wi-fi is switched off before bed times.

### **10. Assuming the 14 days isolation for international students is still in force in this September, how can we order school uniforms and how long does it take for the uniforms to be ready?**

Downside has a school tailor and a school shop available to support all your needs in terms of uniform. School uniform will be available from an online ordering service and will be delivered directly to your child's bedroom. Details of uniform requirements are set out in the school's digital joining instructions.

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