



WITHAM HALL

**PARENTS' GUIDE  
TO BOARDING**



## **BOARDING ETHOS:**

The Boarding House at Witham Hall School is a community within a community; as such, it shares the same philosophies and ideologies as the school as a whole. The Boarding house is very much a 'home-from-home' and those principles that are present in a happy family atmosphere are also present in the Boarding House. Respect for the individual is of paramount importance and all boarders are encouraged to personalise their own space. Respect for each other's belongings is also emphasised.

Boarding teaches self-reliance and responsibility and, within a happy and stable atmosphere, children can develop at their own pace. The Houseparents, Assistant Housemaster, Head Matron, some duty tutors, as well as the Headmaster and his family, all reside in the grounds or the village. The atmosphere engendered will enable boarders to feel able to turn to these members of staff, to share the happy occasions in their lives as well as being able to seek their advice and support.

Any child with a concern, no matter how small, always has access to a member of Boarding staff including Matrons, Houseparents, Boarding Tutors, other boarding staff, and, if required, the local vicar, whom we have registered as an official 'listener'. There is also an opportunity to visit Penny Newton, who is a qualified Counsellor. She visits Witham regularly and she is available for staff and pupils. The boarding team are on call to meet the emotional needs of the boarders; at the same time, they realise that children do need time on their own and are sensitive to issues of privacy. Though children have access to telephones, we do encourage them to try and solve small problems within school before calling home.

We aim to foster a happy atmosphere where values such as politeness and thoughtfulness are prominent. The mix of modern surroundings with traditional values make boarding at Witham Hall, we hope, an interesting and happy experience.

## **BOARDING STAFF:**

### **The Houseparents:**

Mr and Mrs Meadows share the responsibility for the boarding house and all boarders. They oversee all aspects of boarding and most importantly the pastoral care of all boarders. They make decisions regarding which dorm each boarder sleeps in and what bed within the dorm they have. They can be contacted via email ([boarding@withamhall.com](mailto:boarding@withamhall.com) / [imeadows@withamhall.com](mailto:imeadows@withamhall.com) / [cmeadows@withamhall.com](mailto:cmeadows@withamhall.com)) or via telephone (01778 590703). They will contact parents regarding any significant concerns of welfare of their child/children at school and will also make occasional contact throughout the year regarding what is happening in the boarding house, either through email communication or social media platforms.

### **The Matrons:**

The Matrons (Miss Anna Korth, Mrs Jayne Mair, and Mrs Louise Chandler) are responsible for medical



and health issues, hygiene, laundry and tidiness. They are always keen to chat and are available throughout the day and night. Miss Anna Korth is our Head Matron and resides onsite, in a flat accessed through the girls' side of the boarding house.

The Matrons look after the boarders at during the evening, though if there were any serious concerns, they would speak directly to either / both of the Houseparents as appropriate. If your child requires any specific medication, it should be handed to the Matrons with a signed note of consent and appropriate instructions if necessary. For more details on this process please contact them directly.

To telephone the Matron Team please dial 01778 590222 and select option 5. The Matrons can also be contacted via email [matrons@withamhall.com](mailto:matrons@withamhall.com).

### **Assistant Housemaster:**

Mr Chapman is the Assistant Housemaster. He supports the Houseparents in the boarding house and undertakes dorm duties. The boarders will see Mr Chapman in and around the boarding house on a regular basis, as well as in the classroom and on the sports fields.

### **Other Boarding Staff:**

The following named members of staff are involved in boarding, undertaking dorm duties and attending various boarding events. Inevitably, there will be some personnel change from year-to-year, however there is generally a nucleus of staff who have been involved in boarding at Witham for some years now.

|                   |               |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Mr Austen         | Mrs Austen    |
| Mr Callun         | Mrs Foskett   |
| Mr Candy          | Miss Jenkins  |
| Mr Erskine-Naylor | Miss Papworth |
| Mr O'Regan        | Miss Rule     |
|                   | Miss Soppitt  |
|                   | Miss Storey   |
|                   | Miss Thomas   |
|                   | Mrs Tregunno  |

## **BOARDING OPTIONS:**

**Weekly boarding** gives boarders the opportunity to get the most from the boarding experience as they establish stable routines and build-up positive social relationships within the boarding community. Weekly boarding provides the best preparation for pupils who are going to board at their senior school. We class our Weekly Boarders as those who stay with us for either 4 or 5 nights (as a number will return home after matches on a Wednesday when convenient for parents). We would, of course, encourage those wanting to weekly board to do all 5 nights as this best prepares them for full boarding if that is their chosen path at senior school.



**Flexi-boarding** gives pupils the opportunity to try the boarding experience. This can enhance the child's social education and can prove to be helpful to parents.

We aim to take as flexible an approach to boarding as possible and we understand that circumstances can change during a term. The school's position in this regard is that: barring emergencies, which we will always look to meet, a formal request made directly to either Mr or Mrs Meadows with 7 days-notice is required for changes to boarding nights. In such cases, no additional charge will be incurred. 'Swap' nights are not always easy to accommodate and our domestic team and catering team need sufficient notice to ensure that your child/children are exposed to the best experience that boarding provides them with. We also ask that parents of weekly boarders inform Mr or Mrs Meadows if their child will not be boarding on a chosen night, in particular on a Wednesday, so that activities can be planned and catered for accordingly. Whilst we pride ourselves on our flexibility, we want to emphasise the importance of a consistent approach to boarding, which helps all children settle into the routines that boarding provides.

## **Principles of Boarding**

Boarding at Witham Hall aims to:

- Promote positive interaction and sensitivity towards others;
- Promote cooperation within the boarding community;
- Boost each child's self-confidence and independence;
- Encourage more efficient personal organisational skills;
- Foster a sense of personal worth so that all boarders feel valued within the community;
- Encourage pupils to make and keep friends and learn the value and joy of friendship;
- Teach children to be responsible for their own health and hygiene;
- Encourage a sense of responsibility;
- Foster a respect for others, their property and the boarding community as a whole;
- Prepare boarders for boarding life at Senior School.



## **BOARDING ROUTINE:**

|                |      |   |
|----------------|------|---|
| <b>Morning</b> | 0710 | Boarders get up, wash and get dressed.<br>Clean their teeth, make their beds and tidy their dorms |
|                | 0730 | Breakfast – followed by a final dorm inspection.  |
|                | 0815 | Go to form rooms - school day starts  |
| <b>Evening</b> | 1715 | Tea followed by free time and activities.   |

There is a variety of activities on offer and Weekly Boarders are encouraged to take part in at least two evening activities per week. They also have use of Common Rooms, which provide T.V. and a range of games, as well as the new Games Room. The Library is available for quiet time, or work, during the evening. After tea, they can change out of their uniform into their own clothes. Between 1900 and 1945 boarders also have exclusive use of the sports hall, gym and dance studio, during which time the Boarding Team will coordinate the sessions. From 1905, a hot drink and snack are also available.

**Bedtimes** – We have introduced early sign up times on a daily basis, allowing all boarders the opportunity to be up in the boarding house as early as possible, should they wish. The latest time they have to have 'signed up' with the member of staff on duty and go upstairs is:

|      |             |
|------|-------------|
| 1930 | Years 4 & 5 |
| 1945 | Year 6      |
| 2000 | Year 7      |
| 2015 | Year 8      |

When they arrive upstairs, they should shower, brush their teeth and get ready for bed. Weekly Boarders put their laundry in the basket provided. There is free time and then a 15-minute reading period followed by lights out at the following times:

|      |        |
|------|--------|
| 2015 | Year 4 |
| 2030 | Year 5 |
| 2040 | Year 6 |
| 2050 | Year 7 |
| 2100 | Year 8 |

## **DORMITORIES:**

The dormitories are organised by age, which helps with the staggered bedtime routine, as it makes it easier for the Houseparents, Matrons, and members of staff to look after each group of children and help each dorm settle before the older boarders come to bed. Please note, however, that the number



of Flexi-Boarders can sometimes mean that boarders from consecutive year groups may need to share a dormitory.

Dormitory groupings are decided by the Houseparents. As the number of beds in each dorm can restrict dorm arrangements, boarders may not always be able to sleep in the dormitory of their choice. One of the advantages of boarding is that children learn to get on with lots of different people and they should be able to make friends with all the boarders at Witham, no matter which dorm they are in.

Boarders are encouraged to personalise their bedroom to make themselves feel more at home; they should bring in photographs and pictures. Boarders can also bring in their own duvet covers and pillowcases, clearly named of course. Each term, there is a 'Decorate your Dorm' competition, with various themes throughout the academic year. This encourages boarders to make their dormitories feel more homely, and it is lovely to see their pets, favourite sporting teams, and other interests on display in the dorms.

Boarders should always have a reading book or magazine beside their bed for the quiet reading period before the lights go out each night. In the event that a book has been forgotten or finished, there are books available for the boarders to borrow in the book baskets in each bedroom. Books are regularly updated throughout the year.

## **HEALTH AND HYGIENE:**

All boarders shower every day, as well as having the opportunity to shower after games.

Children, who board for four nights or more, keep spare uniform and underwear at school. Clean underwear and socks are provided every day and other items of uniform are laundered regularly (see below). Regular medical checks are made and we keep an eye on general wellbeing on a day-to-day basis. For Weekly Boarders, laundry baskets are put out each evening and clean underwear and socks are provided every day. Shirts, trousers, skirts and sweaters are laundered twice weekly in school. Towels are laundered in school each week, and bedding is laundered every other week.

The surgery at Witham Hall is always open to any child who is unwell. However, the Matrons are busy people and may not be in the surgery when a child wants to see them. Preferably, a child who is unwell will report to a Matron first thing in the morning, during morning break, afternoon snack time or during evening surgery time. If there are no Matrons available in the surgery, there is a 'walkie talkie' for children to use to alert a Matron and she will come to the surgery. Mrs Claire Paylor is always available in the front office if required. If necessary, we will arrange for boarders to see the school Doctor and parents will be contacted.



## **Head Lice:**

Head lice are an ever-present problem in schools but a problem that we seek to minimise at Witham. Should you discover that your child has head lice and they are boarding, please inform a Matron as soon as possible so that she can treat the child whilst he/she is boarding. If head lice are found in any pupil's hair, a Matron will ring the child's parents (after personally verifying that lice are present) and advise them on options available to treat the lice.

If the child is a flexi boarder due to board that night, Matron will suggest that they are taken home at the end of the school day for treatment to begin, in line with the school's treatment policy.

## **KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH HOME:**

Boarders have access to two telephones to contact parents in private. We seek to minimise phone calls made during normal school hours unless there is a real emergency. Boarders and day children are advised that they need to see Mrs Paylor in the School Office if they wish to make a phone call during the school day, and should inform the duty member of staff if they wish to phone home after 1730. All children have their own email address and are encouraged to contact their parents in this way. Boarders may also use the school phone system when deemed appropriate by a member of staff. Boarders' post is put out by the staff pigeon holes each morning.

Contacting home can have both a stabilising and de-stabilising effect depending on the circumstances. We do encourage the children to try to solve small problems and exhaust the support avenues available within school, before they pick up the telephone. Boarders will often get on with things a lot better when they are left to their own devices! As a result of this Flexi-Boarders who are going home the next day shouldn't need to use the phone under normal circumstances.

Although duty members of staff are available to answer the phone in the evening, we would ask that you resist the temptation to call to speak to your child/children during this time unless you feel it necessary.

## **FOOD AND DRINK**

### **Mealtimes:**

Every breakfast includes cereals, fruit juice, fruit, yoghurt, tea, toast; a hot dish or continental pastries are also served at breakfast. Drinks and fresh fruit are available at morning break.

A hot meal with vegetables or salad is provided for lunch along with pudding and fresh fruit. In the afternoon, a snack of biscuits and squash is available. Tea is a lighter affair than lunch and there is also hot chocolate, fruit, cereals and cake for the boarders before they go to bed. Milk and water are available to the children throughout the day and they can have fresh fruit if they are still hungry.



At night boarders can use the water fountains in the boarding areas and every boarder will receive their very own Witham Hall water bottle for use at night. Year 8 boarders also have a special privilege of being allowed toast between 1935 and 2000 in the Tunnard Room.

A food committee meets once a week. The Deputy Head Boy and Head Girl sit on this and, through them and their year group representatives, all children have the opportunity to contribute to menu planning. We are also happy to receive menu suggestions from home.

The food at Witham is superb but there will be times when a meal will not to every child's liking but it will provide the necessary nutrition and the children should make the effort to eat the food provided. Vegetarian options are available and we cater for specific dietary needs when appropriate; these will usually be acknowledged on our medical information lists that all staff members are made aware of.

### **Birthday Teas:**

**If a child is a weekly boarder, or a flexi boarder boarding on the night of their birthday**, they can have a birthday tea at school. For more information on birthday tea's please contact Mrs Meadows ([Imeadows@withamhall.com](mailto:Imeadows@withamhall.com))

## **CLOTHING AND POSSESSIONS**

**Parents are required to clearly and properly label every item of clothing, all bedding, towels and luggage that a boarder brings to school.** Please use sewn nametapes as other types will wash out or fall off. Towels should have hooks on the long side with the nametape sewn below. Play clothes must also be named properly and kept to a minimum, e.g. one pair of jeans, T-shirt, shirt and jumper.

At school, there are plenty of things to do to occupy the boarders' time and plenty of people to play games with and chat to. Boarders do not need to bring expensive games to school; we do not have much storage space and items may get lost or broken. Obviously, they can bring a teddy, books and playing cards into school but they must be clearly named.

Mobile phones, money, tuck and electrical items such as tablets **must not** be brought into school. If a boarder accidentally brings something into school that they think they should not have, they must hand it in to the Matrons, Houseparents or duty member of boarding staff.

The only exception to the above is that Weekly Boarders may bring in an e-reader with books pre-loaded. The device must be given to Matron at lights out.





Boarders should look after their possessions properly and always return things to their correct place after they have used them. Any valuables brought into school can be handed in to a Matron who will record the item on a 'Valuables' sheet and put the item in a secure place, the boarder will need to sign the item in and sign it out when collecting it. The Matrons store items that are found around the boarding house and display anything that has not been claimed at the end of term. After this any remaining unclaimed items are given to charity.

### **What should Weekly Boarders bring to school?**

At the start of each term, Weekly Boarders may return on the evening prior to the first day of school. They should bring with them the following items, which should be **carefully labelled**:

- Socks and Pants x 6
- Shirts x 4
- Jumpers x 2
- Trousers/Skirts/Dresses x 2
- 'Own Clothes' x 2 sets
- Towels x 2
- Duvet and Pillow Covers x 2 sets (the school will provide duvets and pillows)
- Pyjamas x 2 (bottoms must be mid- thigh to full length – no short pyjama shorts will be allowed)

**Each of the above will be laundered within school throughout the term with the exception of own clothes which should return home over the weekend, along with games kit, to be washed.**

### **In addition to the above, Weekly Boarders should also bring:**

- Spare name tapes (to be handed in to matron)
- Dressing gown and slippers (which must be suitable for wearing outside in any weather – during fire drills or in case of fire 'soft soled' slippers are not comfortable outdoor footwear)
- Toilet bag containing
  - Toothbrush & toothpaste
  - shower gel & shampoo
  - comb and hair bobbles/grips (girls)
  - shower cap (girls)
  - Reading book and teddy (if required – many do!)
  - They may also wish to bring in a framed photo or posters and photos to decorate their pin board.

**Please note that aerosols must not be brought into school.**



## **What should Flexi-Boarders bring to school?**

Although we can provide them, Flexi-Boarders might like to bring in a duvet cover and pillowcase (properly named) of their own, which will then be kept at school. If your child boards for 3 nights each week it is advised, they have two duvet covers. If you prefer we can provide these. Each time that they board, Flexi-Boarders must bring the following items into school in a small, clearly named, overnight bag:

- Pyjamas (bottoms must be mid- thigh to full length – no short pyjama shorts will be allowed), Dressing Gown and Slippers (which must be suitable for wearing outside in any weather)
- Toilet bag containing
  - Toothbrush & toothpaste
  - shower gel & shampoo
  - comb and hair bobbles/grips (girls)
  - shower cap (girls)
- Towel
- Clean underwear, socks and a shirt for each day of their stay
- One set of play clothes
- Reading book and teddy (if required)
- They may also wish to bring in a framed photo or posters and photos to decorate their pin board

**Please note that aerosols must not be brought into school.**

**Flexi Boarders** who only have one night at home between boarding nights, or who board 3 nights a week, may leave their boarding bag neatly stored under their bed on nights when they are not boarding. Children who have more than one night at home between boarding night, or who only board one night a week must not leave anything in their bedroom (dressing gowns, towels, slippers, etc.) between the nights they board or over the weekends as we do not have the room to store these items and another boarder will be occupying this space in the bedroom on those nights. They may, of course, leave photos and posters in the dorm.

## **HOW ARE NEW BOARDERS MADE TO FEEL WELCOME?**

Before their first term, new boarders will receive 'The Boarders' Guide', which will introduce them to boarding at Witham Hall. All new boarders are assigned a 'boarding buddy' of a similar age for their first week. This 'boarding buddy' is responsible for helping them to settle in, showing them the facilities and taking them through the boarding routines. After a short settling-in period the Houseparents will contact the parents of new boarders by phone or email to let them know how things are going. There are also 'boarding families' within the boarding house. Each family comprises of members from every year group, and there should always be more than one member of each family boarding every night to offer extra support to all boarders.



## **WHAT IF MY CHILD HAS A PROBLEM AT SCHOOL?**

If your child has a problem at school then they are encouraged to share this and talk to somebody. This could be one (or both) of the Houseparents, the Matrons, their form teacher, any other member of staff who they feel they can talk to – or even a friend. They can phone home and they can contact Father Ed, the school Chaplain, who comes into school every week and is always happy to listen to any problems a child might have. Our independent listener, Liz Power, is completely separate to school, and another port of call for our boarders should they wish.

Additionally, our School Counsellor – Penny Newton– visits school regularly and children can see her during her drop-in sessions. We would always encourage a problem at school being resolved at school before a child phones home.

In the boarding house, we also have post-boxes located in the sitting rooms. These provide children the opportunity to share any suggestions, comments or complaints. There is also the option to remain anonymous should a child wish to, and should they find this easier than speaking directly to a member of staff. The complaints procedure for the whole school should be followed if required, please see the Complaints Policy for further detail.

## **WHAT ARE THE DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP TIMES?**

At the beginning of each term the Weekly Boarders are welcome to return to school the night before academic school starts, to allow for the unpacking of bags and to get settled before the rigours of class work set in. During the term, boarders should be dropped off for the beginning of each week between



0815 and 0820 on Monday morning; they can be picked up for the weekend after 1230 on Saturday unless they are involved in a fixture or other school commitment, in which case they are free to go home at the conclusion of their involvement.

## **LIVING IN A BOARDING HOUSE – A FEW GOLDEN RULES**

Boarding is great fun, but so that everyone can enjoy themselves, there are just a few rules we insist that the children follow:

- 1. Be respectful of all member of the boarding team.**
- 2. Be polite to everyone in the boarding house: children and adults.**
- 3. Respect the privacy and belongings of others.**
- 4. You should only enter someone else's dorm with permission from the boarding staff.**
- 5. Respect each other's right to sleep - NO TALKING after lights out.**
- 6. Be a good boarder – care for each other.**

## **CHAIR OF BOARDING COUNCIL AND BOARDING COUNCIL MEMBERS**

The Chair of Boarding Council is elected by boarding staff and is a position of responsibility within the boarding house. They will work closely with the Houseparents and boarding staff to represent the views and opinions of the whole boarding community. In addition to attending regular meetings, with the Houseparents and the Boarding Council, the Chair of Boarding Council should set a positive example, take pride in the boarding house, adhere to the Witham Way, and be polite and respectful. They will also be expected to welcome and support new boarders, be a role model to peers, and accurately and effectively represent the views of their boarding community.

The Boarding Council consists of approximately 10-12 members from Years 4-8. The dynamics aim to represent a range of boarders; in terms of age and boarding status. Boarding Council members meet every 3-4 weeks to discuss a variety of issues raised by their peers. Council members are responsible for collating their peers views and opinions and feeding them back to the Chair of Boarding Council, Mrs Fuller and the Houseparents within the regular meetings. In turn, they should also feed back to their peers the outcome of any meetings. Boarding Council members should be approachable, open-minded, trustworthy, and prepared to feedback other people's opinions accurately, as well as be able to openly discuss a range of issues within the boarding house.



## **CHILD PROTECTION**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead for Witham Hall School is Mrs Sukey Brewster. Please contact her if you have any concerns or questions. [sbrewster@withamhall.com](mailto:sbrewster@withamhall.com)

## **HOUSE SAFETY & PARENTAL ACCESS TO DORMS**

The boarding areas and the main school building are alarmed. Once the alarms are set, no one can enter or leave the boarding areas without waking everybody up! If the fire alarm sounds, the children will follow the evacuation procedure that is practiced each term.

The entrances to the boys' and girls' dormitories at the top of the main stairs have an electronic keypad entry system. All boarding members of staff have a fob to access to dorms, with the system recording when each fob is used. We no longer use codes on a regular basis, and if a fob is lost it is easily blocked to ensure optimum security.

## **EVENING ACTIVITIES**

There is a variety of activities available (with slight seasonal variations) after tea, from craft to fashion design, photography to cookery, and a whole host of sports (squash, cricket, hockey, touch rugby, football, rounders, netball, golf etc.). There are also weekly band, drum and choir practices, as well as play rehearsals at certain times in the year. Boarders can also use the ICT suites, walled garden, lounges, games room and library. The sports hall is also available for boarders to enjoy with a boarding member of staff in charge.

There is plenty of scope for reading, playing board games or simply watching television. In the lighter months, boarders are encouraged play outside with their friends in the grounds.

During exam periods, there are supervised study sessions for boarders in various locations depending upon their age. In the Trinity term, Year 8s have additional prep sessions as their CE exams approach.

## **FINALLY**

It is our ultimate aim to ensure that anyone who boards at Witham Hall enjoys their time here, feels cared for and looked after, and benefits from the resources, stability, community and environment that a boarding house offers. Welcome to the Witham family!