



**Durham
Cathedral
Schools
Foundation**

Fitness to Board Policy

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Relevant legislation/guidelines	<i>Keeping Children Safe in Education</i> , DfE, September 2025 <i>National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools</i> , DfE, September 2023 <i>Behaviour in Schools</i> , DfE, February 2024 <i>Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions</i> , DfE, December 2015

	Human Rights Act 1998 The Equality Act 2010
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1. Policy aims

- 1.1. This is the Fitness to Board Policy of Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation ('the Foundation').
- 1.2. The purpose of this Policy is to:
 - clarify why and when DCSF may need to consider a pupil's fitness to board;
 - outline the approach that DCSF will take in any such situations; and
 - outline the key responsibilities of members of the DCSF community and our expectations of parents/carers and guardians.
- 1.2 DCSF commits in this policy to observing the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and does not discriminate on any grounds.

2. Policy statements

- 2.1. DCSF aims to create a successful boarding community in which all individuals can flourish within an environment which is safe, structured and is one that promotes positive behaviour, wellbeing and the Foundation's MARK values of Moral Integrity, Ambition, Responsibility and Kindness.
- 2.2. DCSF has an unwavering commitment to safeguarding. As part of this, we recognise that there may be occasions on which having a pupil in boarding may affect the pupil's own safety, their ability to engage in the academic, co-curricular and boarding life of the School, and the safety and welfare of the wider boarding and school community. In such situations, DCSF may need to balance its duty of care towards an individual pupil against its duty of care towards the rest of the school community.
- 2.3. DCSF commits to making child-centred decisions, in conjunction with the pupil, their parents/carers, their guardian, and external agencies (as appropriate). The reasons for any decisions will be recorded in CPOMS.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. A 'boarder' is defined as any pupil who stays at School overnight.
- 3.2. This Policy encompasses boarding in Barrington House, Pimlico House, Poole House, School House, and any other DCSF building which may be used for the purpose of offering boarding accommodation.
- 3.3. A boarder can be a 'full boarder', a 'weekly boarder' or a 'flexi boarder'. This Policy applies to all these arrangements.

4. The need for a Fitness to Board Policy

4.1. Being a boarder is an important educational experience which promotes independence, self-reliance, resilience, responsibility, trust, tolerance and a respect for others. However, there are many reasons why a pupil may be deemed unfit to board. While this may be a permanent decision, it is more likely that such a judgement will be made for a set time period while intervention strategies are put in place internal or external to DCSF to make boarding possible. In such cases, dates when the decision will be reviewed will be agreed upon and clearly communicated.

4.2. The reasons why a pupil may be deemed unfit to board include (but are not limited to):

- Serious mental or physical health issues, which may include:
 - Self-harm;
 - Suicidal ideation;
 - Disordered eating;
 - Substance abuse;
 - Addiction;
- Behavioural issues;
- Non-engagement in school or boarding life, including repeated failure to abide by school or boarding rules and routines;
- Unwillingness or inability to live within a community;
- Anger issues and/or aggression towards other pupils and/or staff;
- Engagement in risk-taking behaviour which puts themselves or others in danger;
- Flight risk and/or disappearance;
- Unwillingness or inability to perform routine acts of self-care;
- Unreasonable time and resources required to support the boarder, which has a continued detrimental effect on the supervision of others in the boarding community.

5. Recruitment of boarders

5.1. The recruitment process helps to identify any pupils who may be unfit to board. Potential issues may be highlighted through the pupil interview, admissions and enrolment forms, and/or documentation received from a pupil's previous/current school.

5.2. This Policy is sent to the parents/carers of all new boarders to ensure that they understand DCSF's requirements and expectations. If necessary, a version of this Policy translated into parents'/carers' first language may be provided.

6. Proactive measures to support boarders

6.1 It is normal that, when moving into, or returning to, boarding, some pupils will experience a degree of homesickness and/or culture shock. Low-level instances of these and other wellbeing concerns should not preclude a pupil from boarding. To support all boarders, DCSF has in place:

- Homely accommodation with personal space for each individual in their boarding room;
- A team of experienced House staff to look after boarders and spend time with them;
- A boarding induction programme;
- Many opportunities to make new friends in boarding and school, including House social events and boarders' activities;
- A buddy system;
- Wi-Fi and many opportunities to contact home;
- Regular check-ins with House staff and Tutors;
- Individual meetings with School Nurses and/or our Senior Mental Health Lead during induction and provision for on-going, regular meetings as required;
- Access to individual and small group meetings with the School Chaplain;
- Access to an Independent Listener;
- Access to a GP and other health professionals as required;
- Kitchens in each House to prepare food during the evenings and weekends;
- Space to pray and support in following religious and cultural observances e.g., Ramadan; and
- Staff in School who speak a range of languages who can help should a boarder need support in their first language. This includes: French, German, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese and Greek.

7. Reactive procedures if there are concerns that a pupil is unfit to board

- 7.1. All concerns, incidents or issues in relation to pupil welfare are recorded on CPOMS by staff.
- 7.2. Individual pupils of concern within the Senior School are discussed by SHMs and the Deputy Head (Pastoral) of Durham School in their scheduled weekly meetings, and on an ad hoc basis if a more serious concern arises. Individual pupils of concern within the Junior School are discussed by the SHM of Barrington House with other members of the Junior School SLT on a regular basis, and on an ad hoc basis with the Head of the Junior School and the Deputy Head (Pastoral) of Durham School if a more serious concern arises.
- 7.3. Any concerns that a pupil may be unfit to board will be discussed at the earliest opportunity with the pupil and their parents/carers, and guardian (if appropriate), in line with DCSF's Safeguarding Policy. DCSF understands that cultural differences may exist, particularly in terms of attitudes towards mental health and behaviour management. Where it would be beneficial and possible, a member of staff who speaks the pupil and/or parent/carer's first language and understands any cultural sensitivities will assist with these discussions. Notwithstanding this, the wellbeing of the pupil must take priority at all times.
- 7.4. A single incident will not usually constitute a reason that a pupil is deemed unfit to board, but may do so if it raises reasonable concerns that the pupil and/or others in the boarding community are at risk of harm should the pupil remain in boarding.

- 7.5. DCSF does not want to deem pupils unfit to board unnecessarily, and will put reasonable interventions in place to support individual pupils as appropriate and where possible. These may include:
- Reasonable adjustments e.g., rooming arrangements, etc.;
 - Mediation and/or support from staff in School and/or external agencies;
 - Greater supervision e.g., at meal times, when taking medication, etc.;
 - Giving a pupil access to their mobile phone overnight, with a plan in place as to who they will call if needed;
 - Training for the boarder and/or staff; and/or
 - A bespoke programme of study and co-curricular activities.
- 7.6. If concerns are raised that a Senior School pupil may be unfit to board and these cannot be mitigated by such reasonable interventions, then the Deputy Head (Pastoral) of Durham School will liaise with other staff as appropriate to decide whether the pupil is fit to board at that time or not. Other staff may include the Principal, the pupil's SHM, the Head of Boarding, the Senior Mental Health Lead, and/or a School Nurse. The Deputy Head (Pastoral) may also seek the opinion of an external professional, such as the pupil's GP or CAMHS worker, if appropriate. In some circumstances, the Deputy Head (Pastoral) may have to make an immediate decision on the course of action to ensure the safety of all.
- 7.7. If concerns are raised that a Junior School pupil may be unfit to board and these cannot be mitigated by such reasonable interventions, then the Head of the Junior School will liaise with other staff as appropriate to decide whether the pupil is fit to board at that time or not. Other staff may include the Principal, the SHM of Barrington House, the Deputy Head (Pastoral) of Durham School, the Head of Boarding, the Senior Mental Health Lead, and/or a School Nurse. The Head of the Junior School may also seek the opinion of an external professional, such as the pupil's GP or CAMHS worker, if appropriate. In some circumstances, the Head of the Junior School may have to make an immediate decision on the course of action to ensure the safety of all.
- 7.8. If it is decided that a pupil is unfit to board, then, in line with DCSF's Safeguarding Policy, it will be clearly communicated to the pupil and their parents/carers, and guardian if appropriate, the reason(s) for this decision, whether this is for a fixed period or permanently, and what support will be put in place for the pupil. As in 7.3 above, efforts will be made to overcome any cultural differences and language barriers, but the wellbeing of the pupil takes priority.
- 7.9. A decision that a pupil is unfit to board does not constitute a suspension or exclusion from the School and, if appropriate, the pupil may attend school as a day pupil during the period when they are unable to board. If a pupil is unable to attend as a day pupil as their parent/carer or guardian lives too far away to allow daily commuting, work will be provided online for the pupil to allow continuity of education. In the case where a pupil is in the UK on a visa sponsored by DCSF, we may need to inform UKVI of the alternative arrangements in place.

- 7.10. If a pupil is deemed unfit to board by the School for a fixed period or permanently, there will be no requirement to pay the full boarding fees while the pupil is away from boarding. Instead, the day fees will be applied during the fixed period/permanently. However, deliberate omission of relevant information may be considered a breach of our Terms and Conditions and the Foundation then reserves the right to charge the full boarding fees for the relevant period.
- 7.11. Should a parent/carer not agree with the decision that their child is unfit to board, they should follow the Complaints Procedure (Parents) Policy. If a pupil does not agree with the decision that they are unfit to board, they should follow the Pupil Complaint Policy.
- 7.12. If a pupil is deemed unfit to board and is unable to attend school as a day pupil due to their individual circumstances, consideration will be to how best to preventing them becoming isolated. The pupil's SHM will lead on this. Possible strategies may include:
- Cards and letters sent from the pupil's House;
 - Use of Teams chat for the pupil to keep in touch with their peers and staff;
 - Use of video calls over Teams at social times in the House;
 - The pupil attending school for short, social times on a pre-arranged basis.
- 7.13. If a pupil is deemed unfit to board but will be attending school as a day pupil, due consideration will be given to what measures need to be put in place to support the pupil while in school. This may include the creation of a Support and Safety Plan (see Appendix A), an individual healthcare plan, a Safety Plan, a report card, or other appropriate measure. Consideration will also be given to the narrative within the School community, and, if appropriate, the pupil will be consulted on this.
- 7.14. If a pupil is deemed unfit to board for a fixed period, a review meeting will be held with the pupil, their parents/carers, and/or guardian if appropriate, towards the end of this period to assess what progress has been made and if the pupil is fit to return to boarding. The Head of the Junior School (for a Junior School pupil) or the Deputy Head (Pastoral) of Durham School (for a Senior School pupil) will chair this meeting and will either liaise with other staff as appropriate beforehand or invite them to attend the meeting. Other staff may include the Principal, the pupil's SHM, the Head of Boarding, the Senior Mental Health Lead, and/or a School Nurse. The meeting chair may also seek the opinion of an external professional, such as the pupil's GP or CAMHS worker, if appropriate, or may invite them to attend the meeting.
- 7.15. If a pupil returns to boarding after a period when they have been deemed unfit to board, due consideration will be given to what measures need to be put in place to support the pupil. This may include the creation of a Support and Safety Plan (see Appendix A), a Safety Plan, an individual healthcare plan, a report card, or other appropriate measure. A phased return to school and/or boarding may also be considered.

8. DCSF's expectations of the parents/carers and/or guardian of a boarder

To best support a boarder at School, DCSF requires that parents/carers:

- Complete all admissions and enrolment forms honestly and provide full information about their child, including mental and physical health problems or previous behavioural issues. Deliberate omission of relevant information may be considered a breach of our Terms and Conditions.
- Disclose any further information about their child which may be relevant and affect their child's fitness to board as and when they become aware of this.
- Live within a two-hour journey to School or appoint a guardian who does so, and respond quickly should School make contact and require support for the boarder.
- Maintain regular contact with the School.
- Act upon advice provided by School and any professional who is supporting the boarder. For example, this could be consenting to a referral for professional help or assessment, e.g., a referral to CAMHS or an Educational Psychologist.

9. Oversight

9.1 Oversight of this Policy is undertaken by the Education Committee of the Governing Body, and the Policy will be reviewed annually.



Appendix 1: Support and Safety Plan

Pupil name		D.O.B.	
Pupil year		House/Form	
Member of staff responsible for this plan			
Pupil safety network <i>(include name and contact details for all members both in the school and outside of the school who form part of this plan)</i>	Name and organisation		Contact no.
	Name and organisation		Contact no.
	Name and organisation		Contact no.
	Name and organisation		Contact no.
	Name and organisation		Contact no.
	Name and organisation		Contact no.

Support categories	Support strategies	Responsible person/s
Internal support	<p><i>What changes to the pupil's routine are in place to support them? For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Breaktime/lunchtime arrangements</i> • <i>Before/after school</i> • <i>Classroom/timetable</i> • <i>1:1 support</i> • <i>School trips</i> <p><i>Has the pupil agreed to these?</i> <i>Who can the pupil talk to at school about personal issues or concerns they have about the plan? How do they access this person?</i> <i>Are any restrictions/expectations required for other pupils?</i> <i>How is the pupil expected to alert staff if needed?</i> <i>What signs of stress in the pupil will be reported immediately by staff to the person responsible? And by the person responsible to parents/carers? How will this communication occur?</i> <i>What is the agreed verbal response the pupil will make to questions from others regarding the incident(s)?</i></p>	<p><i>Which site staff directly support the child / young person in the ways listed in the plan?</i> <i>Who is responsible for informing other relevant staff of the support expectations listed in the plan?</i> <i>Who will coordinate communication with parents?</i></p>
Parent/caregiver support	<p><i>What actions are being taken in the home to help restore the pupil's sense of safety/wellbeing?</i></p> <p><i>What signs of stress in the pupil will be reported immediately to school and other professionals supporting the pupil?</i></p>	<p><i>Which parents/carers will take what responsibility?</i></p> <p><i>Which staff member will be the key contact for parents in all matters relating to the plan?</i></p>
External support	<p><i>Which other agencies or professionals are involved with the pupil or their family?</i> <i>What is the nature and length of their support?</i> <i>How do they liaise with school?</i> <i>Have they contributed to the development of this plan / been given a copy?</i></p>	<p><i>Which staff member liaises with other involved agencies?</i></p>
Plan review	<p><i>What monitoring of the plan will be undertaken?</i> <i>When will the plan be reviewed?</i></p>	<p><i>Who keeps a monitoring record?</i> <i>Who will contribute to the review (include the pupil)?</i></p>
Others with a duty of care	<p><i>This plan will be shared with:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Key pastoral staff</i> • <i>School medical staff</i> • <i>Members of the school's SLT as appropriate and necessary</i> • <i>Parents/carers</i> 	<p><i>Who will arrange for this plan to be shared in a secure manner?</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>External professionals</i> 	
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Signatures			
Member of staff responsible for this plan		Date	/ /
Parent/carer		Date	/ /
Pupil		Date	/ /