



INFORMATION FOR PUPILS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS 2020-2021

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This booklet contains important information for you and for your child/children about how the College operates in normal circumstances. Please take the time to read it carefully and to share the relevant points with them.

As a result of the Coronavirus (COVID 19) temporary alterations to the general operation of the school will be put in place from August 2020. I will inform you of these prior to the reopening of the school.

I wish all members of the College community a happy and productive year.

S. Naismith
Principal

Summer 2020

Values and Aims of Methodist College Belfast

Values

Founded by the Methodist Church in 1865 the College is a non-denominational, co-educational grammar school, where pupils of all faiths and none are welcomed into a safe, supportive and inclusive environment. We aim to provide equal opportunities for all and the diverse talents of each of our pupils are appreciated, nurtured and celebrated. The development of intellectual curiosity, critical debate, active and independent learning, and the pursuit of excellence are all valued. Through the pursuit of curricular and extra-curricular activities we support and promote our belief in the importance of developing the whole child. Our pupils are encouraged to be enthusiastic, confident and tolerant young people, who have respect for themselves and for others.

Aims

At Methodist College we seek to:

- challenge, inspire and support our pupils as individuals to grow intellectually, personally and spiritually, and to achieve their potential;
- promote high academic standards and the development of diverse skills and capabilities through a variety of curricular and extra-curricular activities;
- encourage a questioning approach which searches for truth through reason, research and debate based on freedom of thought and expression;
- encourage creativity as a way of nurturing the human spirit and improving the quality of life;
- work for the benefit of the school and the local community, while promoting the concept of service to all communities, national and international;
- encourage environmental awareness, recognising our responsibility for the welfare of the planet;
- prepare our pupils to be responsible citizens and leaders, who respect the value of cultural diversity and our common humanity in a fast-changing and complex world;
- promote social justice and to counter prejudice and intolerance by encouraging mutual respect and understanding;
- provide opportunities for pupils to work together to develop an understanding of the importance of forgiveness, reconciliation, recognition and renewal in order that individuals, communities and society may flourish;
- recognise that learning is a life-long process by which we seek to gain not only qualifications but also humility and wisdom.

By the time they leave the College the pupils should be ready and able to contribute to society in the spirit of John Wesley's challenge to:

“Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.”

Pastoral Care and the Form Teams

At the College, staff are committed to helping pupils develop their potential in a supportive and positive environment. Thus, all members of staff have a pastoral role. However, some staff have a very special part to play in the Pastoral Care and Form Teams.

The Heads of Section for Junior School (Miss J McDonald), Middle School (Mrs L Forsythe) and Senior School (Mrs L McCluggage), have responsibility for co-ordinating the Form work within the College and are supported by a Form team consisting of a Head of Form, Deputy Head of Form, Form Tutor and Tutors. Each pupil is a member of a Tutor Group, and the Tutor, who is an integral part of the Form Team, has a specific responsibility for the pupils' academic and pastoral welfare. The Tutors are in a unique position to establish a working relationship with the pupils in their Group, to monitor their development and to deal with a wide range of matters. If you wish to discuss an issue regarding the educational welfare or academic progress of a pupil, contact the Tutor in the first instance or the relevant Head of Form or Head of Department.

On occasions, you may have a pastoral concern because of family or personal difficulties affecting your child. You should contact a member of the Pastoral Care team, either the Deputy Head of Pastoral Care for Junior School (Mrs A Kennedy), Middle School (Mrs K Parks), or Senior School (Mrs H Parker). Urgent or highly sensitive issues should be brought to the attention of the Head of Pastoral Care, Mrs A Logan, or the Vice Principal (Pastoral), Mr A Craig.

To help support pupils, there is also a counsellor from an independent counselling service, called Familyworks, which is approved by the Education Authority Independent Counselling Service for schools. The Counsellor is a professional and has been appropriately vetted. The service is intended for young people with acute or critical issues and Methody has currently been allocated seven appointments per week and two drop in sessions. The Familyworks counsellor works in partnership with the College's Pastoral Care team. Information about the service is available from Mrs Logan.

Special Educational Needs

In the College there are particular staff with specific responsibilities for special educational needs. If you have any concerns in this area, please contact the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, Dr Anderson.

Safeguarding

In common with other schools, we follow government advice regarding our safeguarding procedures. It is an unfortunate reality that some young people will suffer abuse. This is, of course, completely unacceptable and if a member of staff becomes aware that a pupil may be suffering some form of abuse, then he/she follows the College's policy and reports the matter to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection (Mrs Logan) or one of the Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection (Mr Craig, Mrs Parker, Mrs Parks & Mrs Kennedy). The Designated Teacher follows a formal procedure which includes giving a written account to the Principal and informing the Chairman of the Board of Governors. In cases of suspected abuse the College is also obliged to report the matter to Social Services. Clearly, a parent/guardian who suspects that a pupil is being abused should advise the school immediately. In addition, the Chairman of the Board of Governors (Mr M Humphreys) as Designated Governor for Child Protection may be contacted about any child protection matter. In the event of continued concerns by parents/guardians, issues can be raised with the College using the "Parental Contacts with the school about Concerns or Problems Policy". Copies of the latter, the Child Protection Policy and the Anti-Bullying Policy are available on request from the College and are on our website, www.methody.org.

Positive Behaviour Policy

The role of parents /guardians in the educational development of pupils is critical. The College shares with each parent /guardian the aspiration that all pupils will attain their educational potential in the widest sense. It is in this spirit of partnership that it is hoped that parents and carers will co-operate fully with the College in ensuring that their children conform to the Positive Behaviour Policy. (See website www.methody.org.)

The following points require particular attention and co-operation from parents/guardians:

- punctual attendance every day, with illness or prior permission as the only grounds for absence;
- the wearing by pupils of school uniform and neat general appearance as the College directs;
- appropriately courteous behaviour of pupils at all times both in school and on the way to and from school;
- the completion by pupils of homework in accordance with deadlines set by teachers;
- checking and countersigning of homework diary by parents/carers (Forms 1 – 4) on a weekly basis;
- attendance at detentions during or out of school hours;
- attendance by pupils, as required, at College events, sometimes out of school hours;
- participation by pupils in Games (including on Saturdays, if required) unless excused;
- proper fulfilment of obligations voluntarily assumed by pupils, e.g. rehearsals for school plays or concerts;
- keeping Form and Pastoral teams informed regarding issues which may affect the well being of pupils;
- attendance at meetings with teachers to discuss pupils' progress;
- support for College functions;
- the clear marking of all clothing and belongings brought into the College by pupils with the owner's name;
- respect by pupils for the property of others;
- pupils' care of, and respect for, College property, with unlawful damages being paid for;
- ensuring that pupils are not left off or collected inside the grounds of the College.

The attention of parents/guardians is drawn to our expectations of pupils regarding, not just the standards above, but also the Code of Conduct for Pupils included below and also to be found in the introduction to the MCB Homework Diary, on the website (www.methody.org) and the Uniform Regulation Booklet.

The Principal is always willing to discuss individual cases or concerns about any aspect of the Positive Behaviour Policy with parents/guardians. Where difficulties cannot be resolved by such discussion, continuance at the College depends on acceptance of the Principal's jurisdiction in these matters.

General Regulations 2020-2021

As a result of the Coronavirus (COVID 19) temporary alterations to the general operation of the school mean that points 1 to 5 and point 13 will be different from the information below.

IN NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE SCHOOL WILL OPERATE AS FOLLOWS.

1. All pupils must be in school by **8.40 am** for their Tutor Group Assembly at 8.45 am. Those who have not reported to Tutor group or registered in a morning activity before proceeding to Main Assembly or Form Assembly will be recorded as ABSENT (unless they have recorded their presence in school by reporting to the Administration Centre); an excuse note will then be required. Separate arrangements will apply for U6 registration.
2. Pupils should not normally arrive for school before **8.25 am** and should leave the premises **within 10 minutes** of the end of their final lesson, unless attending an extra-curricular activity supervised by a member of staff (including Library study).
3. Pupils must remain on the school premises throughout the school day, including break and lunch, unless special leave has been given. Sixth Form **only** have permission to be out of school during lunchtime.
4. **School ends at 3.15 pm Monday-Thursday and 3pm Friday.**

Lunch and Canteen/Deli Bar Arrangements

5. The lunch interval is from 12.50pm - 1.35pm (12.35-1.20pm Friday).

Pupils in Forms 1-5 must take lunch in the College Canteen or Deli Bar, or eat their packed lunches in the areas allocated. They must not purchase and/or have food delivered to them from local fast-food outlets.

For pupils who wish to buy lunch at school, hot and cold food is available in the College Canteen and Deli Bar. Food and drinks available in the College comply with the government's requirements regarding healthy eating. Canteen tickets may be purchased from the Rolls Office in books of 10 or 20 at break or lunchtime on the day prior to the first day that they are required.

Permission to be Absent Requests and Absence Notes

6. **Planned absence:**
It is the policy of the College that pupils should not be absent from school during term time except in case of illness or other emergency; this is important at the beginning and end of terms as well as at other times. In special circumstances, where absence is unavoidable, leave of absence must be obtained in advance. Requests for leave of absence should be made in writing, explaining the circumstances, a **minimum of three days** before the required date. Requests for absence for part of a day should be made to the pupil's Tutor (**in this instance notification via Schoolcomms is also acceptable**), for a complete day to the Head of Form and for periods longer than one day to the appropriate Head of Section. When a pupil leaves school during the day, for a medical or dental appointment, for example, he or she **must** sign out in the Administration Centre and sign in there on return to school. **It should be noted that social engagements, entertainment, holidays, etc. are not acceptable as a reason for absence.**
7. **Absence due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances:**
In the case of absence due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances, parents who have signed up for the **Schoolcomms*** system are asked to text the College on **01287 244005** or via the App before **9.00 am** on **each** day of absence. Alternatively parents may contact the appropriate Administrative Assistant by phone (see below) who will record the details, or you can leave a message via voicemail.

The Department of Education requires that we receive **written confirmation** from the parent/guardian when a pupil is absent from school giving the reason and date(s). Notification via **Schoolcomms** on each day of absence satisfies this requirement. However, a telephone call must be followed up by written confirmation and consequently on returning to the College after absence on account of illness or other emergency, a pupil **MUST** bring an explanatory letter signed by a parent/guardian **stating clearly the dates of absence and the reason unless a Schoolcomms message has been received on EACH day of absence.** This must be presented at the Tutor Group Assembly to the Tutor.

Parents/guardians who have signed up for the **Schoolcomms** system will receive a message if their child does not arrive in school and we have not been informed about the reason for their absence. Parents **should** reply about absences to **01287 244005** or via the **App**. (All queries not related to absences should be made to reception on **02890205205**).

Illness during the school day.

8. If a pupil feels unwell during the school day they should go to the San where Sister will assess their condition. If deemed necessary, she will contact the parent and request that the pupil is collected from the College. **Pupils must not contact their parents directly in this regard unless advised to do so by a member of staff.**

Restrictions on Cars in the College Grounds

9. Please note that parents/guardians are not allowed to drive into the College grounds to deliver or collect pupils from school unless permission has been sought in exceptional circumstances from a Head of Section. **Students are not allowed to drive cars into the College grounds.** A sanction will be issued to students who fail to adhere to this regulation.

Respect for Property

10. All pupils are expected to assist in maintaining the good appearance of the buildings and grounds. It will be regarded as a serious offence for any paper or other litter to be left anywhere on the premises. Litter baskets and recycling bins are provided at numerous points.

Any accidental damage to College property must be reported **immediately** to a member of staff. Deliberate damage will result in a sanction which may include the immediate exclusion from the College of the pupil concerned.

Mobile Devices (including phones)

11. If a mobile device is brought into school it must be kept out of sight in a school bag or zipped blazer pocket at all times during lessons unless instructed otherwise by a teacher. **Outside the classroom pupils are only permitted to use such devices during breaktime & lunchtime.**

A mobile device which is used may be confiscated by a member of staff to be returned at the end of the school day. If a pupil is found using a mobile device to take a photographic image, given its potential for inappropriate usage, it will be confiscated but **returned only to the parent/guardian.** If there is an emergency, parents/guardians can phone Reception for advice on how to contact their child.

If exceptional circumstances arise when the guidelines do not adequately deal with a particular situation, it is important for a parent/guardian to contact the appropriate Head of Section. Of course, a pupil may approach a member of staff if an unforeseen situation arises.

Personal Property (including mobile devices)

12. Every article brought to school, especially all clothing, should be marked clearly (preferably with name-tapes or marking ink) with the full name of the owner. On occasions pupils may ask a member of staff to look after small personal items such as watches. While staff will be as helpful as possible, it must be understood that the College cannot accept any responsibility for the loss of such items. **All valuables, including bicycles, mobile devices and musical instruments, should be covered by home insurance.**

Non-essential items of value or large sums of money should not be brought to school. Items such as watches or money **must not** be left in lockers, changing rooms or the sports pavilions **AT ANY TIME**. It is **the pupils' responsibility** to take care of all personal possessions. The College does not accept responsibility for personal property brought in to school by pupils.

Please note that lockers will not be available to pupils until after social distancing measures are ended and then, only on request.

Games and PE

13. All pupils required to do so must take part in organised Games unless they are excused for medical reasons. Requests to be excused Games must be made in writing by a parent/guardian, and the letter taken to the P.E. Office by break of the day in question. For extended absence from Games a doctor's certificate may be required. (Pupils must not attend non-turnout class without first having reported, by break-time with excuse note, to the Sports Hall office).

Special buses are arranged to convey pupils to and from afternoon Games venues (at Pirrie Park, Deramore and elsewhere) but parents/guardians may wish to make arrangements to collect their children from these venues. Parents/guardians are responsible for transport to 'home' fixtures on Saturday mornings. When afternoon Games are cancelled, all pupils in the Forms concerned must attend classes or other activities as arranged by the P.E. staff.

All Games kit and equipment must be clearly marked with the owner's name.

Change of Contact Information for Parents/Guardians

14. Parents/guardians should notify the College, in writing, of any change of home address, telephone numbers and email addresses immediately. Separate letters are required for each child of the family at the Grammar and Preparatory Departments of the College.

Behaviour

15. When places are offered and accepted, it is on the understanding that parents/guardians will undertake to co-operate with the College in ensuring that their children conform with its traditions and standards and will accept that the College also has rules which may relate to aspects of a pupil's life outside the College. Please also refer to the Code of Conduct for Pupils, Uniform Regulations and the Positive Behaviour Policy (on website).

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PUPILS

Attendance

All pupils must:

- attend on every occasion that the school is in session, unless ill, or unless prior permission has been given;
- arrive in school no earlier than 8.25am, unless involved in a supervised College activity;
- arrive for Tutor Group Assembly (registration class) by 8.45am;
- provide written explanation from a parent/carer for every absence;
- attend all classes, Assemblies, Games and activities as shown on individual timetables and rotas;
- remain on the school premises until the end of each school day (Sixth Form pupils are allowed to leave the school grounds at lunchtime but must return promptly for the start of the afternoon session).
- leave the College grounds within ten minutes of their last supervised activity;
- if feeling ill during the course of the school day, go to the Sanatorium (going home without permission from the College Nurse or a senior member of staff is not permitted);
- if present in school but unable to take part in school Games or Physical Education classes, bring a letter of explanation from parents/carers to the Head of the Physical Education Department;
- request permission from teachers prior to being absent from class;
- wear uniform in line with College Uniform Regulations at all times when uniform is worn. See Uniform Booklet or website.

Attitude and behaviour

All pupils must:

- set high standards of behaviour for themselves, both inside school and on the journey to and from school, or when involved in school activities;
- take responsibility for their behaviour, attitude and appearance at all times;
- show courtesy and consideration for all other pupils, teaching and ancillary staff, and visitors to the College at all times.
- observe and adhere to all safety instructions given to them;
- arrive in each class on time, with the correct materials and resources and with all necessary preparatory work and homework completed on time to the best of their ability;
- follow instructions given by all teachers, ancillary staff and College Prefects at all times;
- take responsibility for their own possessions and belongings, ensuring that where possible, all are clearly marked with their name;
- report any accident or breakage immediately to a member of staff;
- take responsibility for valuable possessions brought into school.

Pupils must not:

- use offensive language or act in an offensive or violent manner towards any other person;
- bring into school any item or substance which will contravene school regulations such as alcohol, illegal drugs or any substance which has an intoxicating or hallucinatory effect (smoking, including smoking e-cigarettes, is strictly forbidden in all circumstances, both inside school and on the way to and from school and school activities);
- borrow, use or take away any item belonging to another person without clear permission;
- intentionally damage College property or that belonging to another person;
- eat or drink in class, assembly, corridors, locker areas or in study areas (pupils are permitted to drink still water in class only with the permission of their teacher);
- use mobile phones/devices at any time during the school day, with the exception of break & lunchtime, or with the permission of a member of staff;
- record or send an image or sound without the permission of a member of staff and the people being recorded;
- bring into school knives, other weapons or any dangerous item;
- interfere with fire extinguishers or fire alarms.

TERMS AND HOLIDAYS 2020 - 2021

AUTUMN TERM:	25 AUGUST 2020 - 18 DECEMBER 2020
AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY	31 AUGUST 2020
HALF-TERM HOLIDAY:	26 OCTOBER 2020 - 30 OCTOBER 2020
SPRING TERM:	4 JANUARY 2021 - 26 MARCH 2021
HALF-TERM HOLIDAY:	15 - 19 FEBRUARY 2021
SUMMER TERM:	12 APRIL 2021 - 30 JUNE 2021
MAY DAY HOLIDAY:	3 MAY 2021

Note 1:

- All dates are inclusive
- Provisional Staff Development Days (pupils do not attend) for 2020 – 2021 are:
23.10.20 with 4 further dates to be confirmed.

Note 2:

The Education Authority (EA) has a policy of co-ordinating the dates of school holidays in all the Primary and Secondary schools under its control and of providing school transport only on the dates when their schools are in session. Since the College holidays do not always coincide exactly with those of EA schools, there can be occasions when the College is in session but there is no school transport available. Based on information provided by the EA, it would appear that there will be a number of dates during the 2020-21 academic year when the College will be open but school transport will not be provided and pupils will not be able to use their bus/train passes. Parents/guardians of any children who may be affected should note that the dates are:

Tuesday 25 August 2020
 Wednesday 26 August 2020
 Thursday 27 August 2020
 Friday 28 August 2020
 Wednesday 17 March 2021
 Monday 31 May 2021

It is hoped that parents/guardians will make an alternative arrangement to enable their children to attend school on these dates.

Board of Governors' Policy Statement on Charging

In accordance with the requirements of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989,

A it is the policy of the Board of Governors to:

1. make a capital charge (supplementary fee) within the limits set by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland;
2. charge in respect of tuition and all other costs in the case of 'excepted pupils' (i.e. those not entitled to a non-fee-paying place);
3. charge for individual music tuition;
4. require payment from parents/guardians for damage to or loss of College property caused wilfully or negligently by their children;
5. charge for the provision and use of lockers;
6. charge for the supply of the annual school magazine;
7. charge for meals taken in the school canteen;
8. reserve the right to charge for other supplies and services provided to pupils which are beyond the curriculum.

B the Board of Governors may at their discretion

1. charge, except where pupils are entitled to statutory remission, for all board and lodging costs on residential trips;
2. charge for activities wholly or mainly outside school hours which are not part of the Northern Ireland curriculum, statutory religious education or in preparation for a prescribed public examination.

C the Board of Governors will not

1. make any charge for examination entries, except where:
 - (a) the College has not prepared the pupils in the year for which the entry is made, or
 - (b) a pupil has failed, for no good reason, to complete the requirements of the examination, or to attend for it;
2. make any charge in respect of books, materials, equipment, instruments or incidental transport provided in connection with education during school hours or the College's curriculum, or for statutory religious education or in preparation for a prescribed public examination prepared for by the College, except where parents/guardians have indicated in advance their wish to purchase the product.

The Board of Governors will request voluntary contributions from parents/guardians in the event of the amount of grant from the Department of Education being insufficient to maintain the facilities, the courses, and the activities at the standard customarily available at the College. This will be referred to as the College Fund payment. This Fund will be used solely for implementing the aims of the College.

In cases where parents/guardians are unable to meet any of the statutory charges referred to above, they may apply to the Board of Governors to have the charge met on their behalf. A pupil will not be excluded from an activity solely by reason of the inability or unwillingness of parents/guardians to make a voluntary contribution; certain activities may, however, be able to take place only if there is sufficient voluntary funding.

The Board of Governors delegates to the Principal the authority

- (i) to decide the proportion of the costs of an activity which should be charged to public or non-public funds, and
- (ii) to determine the action to be taken in any individual case arising from the implementation of this policy.

It is not the intention of the Board that this policy should be repeated in full to parents/guardians on each occasion when a charge (which will be called a 'fee') is made, or a voluntary contribution (which will be called a 'payment') is requested. It will, however, be referred to on each such occasion.

Note: An 'excepted pupil' is defined as:

- (i) a grammar school pupil who is not resident in Northern Ireland;
- (ii) a grammar school pupil whose parents are not resident nor EC nationals;
- (iii) a pupil in a grammar school preparatory department.

Capital Fee and College Fund

Parents/guardians are responsible for the payment of a Capital Fee and are also asked to contribute to the College Fund; any other expenses are of a personal nature. A copy of the Board of Governors' policy statement on charging is enclosed, as required by the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989. Details of arrangements for payment of the above are sent to parents/guardians separately.

The Capital Fee, currently £140.00* per annum, is set by the Department of Education and charged by the College in respect of each pupil. This fee is payable because the College, as a Voluntary Grammar School, is responsible for part of capital building costs, even though it is grant-aided by the Department of Education.

The College Fund payment is a separate contribution from parents/guardians. It is a voluntary payment which was introduced some years ago by the Board of Governors in the belief that, despite government under funding, parents/guardians would not wish to see any reduction in the quality or breadth of educational provision in the College. A leaflet explaining the College Fund is sent separately to all parents. The level of contribution for 2019-20 was £590*. This will be reviewed by the Governors in light of the current circumstances. The College is confident that parents/guardians will support this Fund to ensure that all the pupils continue to receive the best possible education. Parents will not be asked to contribute to the College Fund for more than two children at any one time.

The Board of Governors encourages parents/guardians to make the College Fund payment by Gift Aid. This means that the College, as a charity, is able to recover from the Inland Revenue income tax amounting to 25p per pound on top of each contribution, at no additional cost to the parent/guardian. Further information and Gift Aid forms will be sent to parents/guardians in due course. Please note it is not possible to Gift Aid the Capital Fee.

* These figures pertain to 2019-20. The precise amount for 2020-21 will be included in the annual schedule of fees sent to parents/guardians at the beginning of the academic year.