



## **INFORMATION FOR PUPILS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS 2021-2022**

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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 may continue from August 2021. 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 2021

# 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 F Quinn), Middle School (Mrs A Kennedy), 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.

## **Learning Support (Special Educational Needs)**

In the College there are particular staff with specific responsibilities for learning support. If you have any concerns in this area, please contact the Learning Support 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 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](http://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](http://www.methody.org).)

**If we are still subject to COVID-related restrictions 'Late', Stage 1 & Stage 2 detentions will be replaced by appropriate interventions issued by the relevant staff. The Positive Behaviour Policy will reflect these changes accordingly.**

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;
- completion of work set by staff within the requested timeframe.
- 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 wellbeing 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](http://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 2021-2022

As a result of COVID 19 temporary alterations to the general operation of the school may mean a change from the normal procedures. Further clarity will be given in August.

### IN NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE SCHOOL WILL OPERATE AS FOLLOWS.

1. Pupils must be in tutor group by **8.45 am**. Those who have not reported to Tutor group or registered in a morning activity will be recorded as ABSENT (unless they have recorded their presence in school by reporting to the Administration Centre); a parental message by the Gateway App/Schoolcomms will then be required. U6 pupils are not required to attend until their 1<sup>st</sup> taught period at which their attendance at school will be recorded.
2. Pupils in Forms 1 - 5 who arrive early may go into their registration classroom 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. L6 pupils should wait in the Sixth Form Centre and proceed to registration for 8.45am.
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 and with parental permission U6 students may leave school from lunchtime if they do not have afternoon class.
4. **School ends at 3.15 pm Monday-Thursday and 3pm Friday.**

### Lunch and Canteen/Deli Bar Arrangements

5. The lunch interval is as follows:  
**Forms 1-3:** 12.00-12.48pm (11.45 – 12.33pm Friday)  
**Forms 4-U6:** 12.48 - 1.35pm (12.33 -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.

A biometric system is in operation in which parents can 'top up' online to cover the cost of their child's lunch. Pupils are also able to top up their account at one of the cash machines located in the Canteen/Sixth Form Centre.

### Permission to be absent requests and unplanned absence

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 by the Gateway App, explaining the circumstances, **a minimum of three days** before the required date. 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 are asked to message via the App before **9.00 am** on **each** day of absence. Alternatively parents may contact the appropriate Administrative Assistant by phone (see following) who will record the details, or you can leave a message via voicemail.

028 90205206 Junior School (Forms 1-3)  
028 90205213 Middle School (Forms 4-5)  
028 90205226 Senior School (Forms L6-U6)

Mrs R. Henderson  
Mrs P. Sutton  
Mrs L. Allen-Antuna

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 Gateway App on each day of absence satisfies this requirement. However, a telephone call must be followed up by written confirmation from a parent/guardian **stating clearly the dates of absence and the reason again using the Gateway App.**

Parents/guardians will receive a message via Gateway App 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 via the **Gateway 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**

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 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.

## 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 via the Gateway App before 12pm on the day in question. For extended absence from Games a doctor's certificate may be required. Pupils **excused by the PE department** from Games may go home at lunchtime.

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/PE kit and equipment must be clearly marked with the owner's name.

On Games day pupils may leave their Games kit in the storage bays (off the main KLM corridor) before 8.45am and collect it at lunchtime. These bays are locked between these times.

## Changes in 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. This should be done by electronic means.

## 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;
- ensure that electronic explanation from a parent/carer covers 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 (with the exception for Sixth Form pupils previously noted)).
- 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, ensure that a parent provides an reason by electronic means from parents/guardian;
- 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 2021 – 2022

Exact details concerning the start of term will be forwarded in August. **Please note that Monday 30 August is not a school holiday.**

<b>AUTUMN TERM:</b>	<b>26 AUGUST 2021- 17 DECEMBER 2021</b>
<b>HALF-TERM HOLIDAY:</b>	<b>25 OCTOBER 2021 - 29 OCTOBER 2021</b>
<b>SPRING TERM:</b>	<b>3 JANUARY 2022 - 8 APRIL 2022</b>
<b>HALF-TERM HOLIDAY:</b>	<b>14 - 18 FEBRUARY 2022</b>
<b>SUMMER TERM:</b>	<b>25 APRIL 2022 - 30 JUNE 2022</b>
<b>MAY DAY HOLIDAY:</b>	<b>2 MAY 2022</b>
<b>PLATINUM JUBILEE HOLIDAY:</b>	<b>3 JUNE 2022 (additional Bank Holiday)</b>

### Note 1:

- All dates are inclusive
- Provisional Staff Development Days (pupils do not attend) for 2020 – 2021 are:  
22.10.21  
11.04.22  
3 further SDD to be arranged

### 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:

Thursday 26 August 2021  
Friday 27 August 2021  
Monday 30 August 2021  
Tuesday 31 August 2021  
Wednesday 17 March 2022  
Thursday 2 June 2022

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

## 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 available on request from the School Business Manager.

A fee note is sent to parents at the start of the academic year together with details of arrangements for payment which should be made by 31 October or by direct debit over ten months.

The Capital Fee, which is currently £140.00 per annum, is set by the Department of Education and charged by the College in respect of each pupil, unless the pupil is a Free Schools Meals pupil. This fee is a legislative fee, and is charged because the College, as a Voluntary Grammar School, is responsible for 15% of capital building costs, these are not fully grant-aided by the Department of Education.

The College Fund payment is a separate contribution requested from parents/guardians. It is a voluntary contribution and is an opportunity for parents to work in partnership with the College toward delivering its values and aims, recognising that despite government under funding, the College and 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 suggested level of contribution for 2021-22 is £590 per pupil. All contributions to the Fund are spent in the same academic year, for the benefit of all pupils. 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. Please note it is not possible to Gift Aid the Capital Fee.

The College has had a number of very generous donations from past pupils over the years. These tend to be for particular capital projects or for purposes specified by the donor, such as for the promotion of pupil mental health and well-being and enhancing opportunities for pupils of modest means. The Board of Governors are extremely grateful for all donations, which are a testament to the donors' appreciation and support of the College's aims and values, fulfilling the challenge from John Wesley 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".