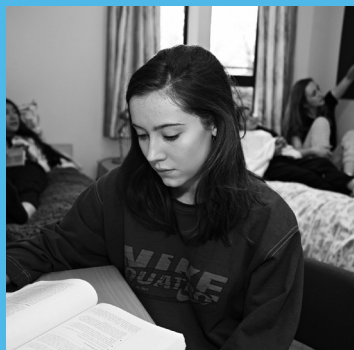


# Boarding Handbook

Advice & Information

ST MARY'S



Prior Park  
College



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## WELCOME FROM ST MARY'S HOUSE PARENT

Hello!

A very warm welcome from me, Melanie Gittins, your St Mary's House Parent at Prior Park College – or Housemama as the St Mary's girls call me! I live in St Mary's with my husband Paul, my daughters Charli (age 15) and Amelie (age 13) and my cute but crazy Dalmatian dogs, Bella & Digby!

As your House Parent I am your 'stand in parent' while you are away from home. You will see me every morning before you go to School and every day after School. It is my role to support you and cheer you on as you navigate school life. We are a house of 70 incredible young ladies from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures. My favourite thing about boarding is the friendships that you will make, with people you would never have met if it wasn't for St Mary's.

I am so pleased that you have decided to make St Mary's your home. Having moved from Australia 22 years ago, I completely understand the nerves and excitement that go along with starting somewhere new, especially if that is a new country! I will be with you every step of the way to ensure you become a happy and confident boarder, who doesn't want to leave! We think you are going to love being part of the St Mary's family, we really are a family. You will find that St Mary's feels like home very quickly – the girls and staff who live here are extremely friendly and love nothing more than a chat and a giggle over treats in the office or one of our kitchens, or relaxing in our beautiful garden. We are a wonderfully diverse family, with girls from all over the world. We love to learn from each other and make each other laugh.

Weekends as a St Mary's boarder can be as relaxed or as busy as you want them to be. Whether you choose to take part in our evening house fun – from karaoke to dance offs, jewellery making to baking, or even a serious games night (which always gets very competitive) – or just relax by watching a film in the common room, there is something for everyone.

It is normal to be nervous but be reassured that you are going to have a fantastic time! I am so looking forward to meeting you in September. Please do email me with any questions or concerns before you arrive. I am your first point of contact before you arrive and am very happy to help.

I can't wait to welcome you to St Mary's.

**Mel Gittins**

Email: [stmarysboarding@priorparkschools.com](mailto:stmarysboarding@priorparkschools.com)

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## INTRODUCTION

Prior Park is a school with strong community, which is welcoming, positive and cheerful. We place great emphasis on pastoral care and mutual support.

### ST MARY'S HOUSE

House Parent - Mel Gittins

E: [stmarysboarding@priorparkschools.com](mailto:stmarysboarding@priorparkschools.com)

### HEAD OF BOARDING

Sukey Holder

E: [sholder@priorparkschools.com](mailto:sholder@priorparkschools.com)

## BOARDING LIFE

### BOARDING AND PASTORAL CARE AT PRIOR

Prior Park boarding has existed since 1830 and we believe that the family atmosphere of the school is enhanced greatly by its boarding community. Boarding is mainly either full or weekly, but we offer flexi and some occasional boarding if we have availability.

Please do contact

[flexiboarding@priorparkschools.com](mailto:flexiboarding@priorparkschools.com) for enquiries.

The ethos of the school is one of inclusion, nurture and challenge, based firmly on the principles of a Catholic Christian education, with boarders given high quality pastoral care in defined House units run by specialist boarding staff. Each House has a dedicated live-in House Parent and a team of resident tutors to ensure the pastoral care and organisation essential to the community and to every individual.

### ADMISSIONS TO BOARDING

Normal entry points are at 11+ (Year 7), 13+ (Year 9) and 16+ (Year 12), involving interview, tests and school reports. Many international boarders also join in Lower 5 (Year 10) to access our GCSE programme. Provision is made for students with language development needs through our EAL (English as an additional

### ST PAUL'S HOUSE

House Parent - Leigh Andrews

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Language) and Language Support programmes. A range of awards are available. All registrations and admissions occur through the Registrar.

### ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Students whose first language is not English sit the Prior Park College entrance test in English. Parents will be advised about how much EAL support the pupil will need. There is a charge for this help. In 10-11 international students study IGCSE in EAL and no charge is levied for this course. EAL workshops are also given as an activity, in the Michaelmas Term, for international students which include debating, role-play, tasks and quizzes.

### THE HOUSES

There are two boarding Houses; St. Mary's (girls) and St. Paul's (boys), each with their own dedicated space and facilities. Both houses have their own kitchens but all meals are taken in the school's dining room. The wider facilities of the campus are also available to all boarders, including sports and music resources.

The school has a rich programme of co-curricular activities and there are frequent concerts and drama productions. The local shops of Combe Down village give easy access to any necessary

provisions, whilst Bath offers sightseeing shopping, cinema, theatre and sport.

### BOARDING ETHOS AND PRINCIPLES

Boarding Houses provide a term-time home for students and give a tremendous opportunity for positive development.

Within boarding we recognise:

- The development of the whole person and the communication of values are vital
- Being an open and trusting school, boarding is based upon mutual respect for all its members
- Each boarder has the right to be able to work, play and relax free from abuse, intimidation, harassment, teasing and bullying
- There is equality of opportunity and respect for all boarders, regardless of ethnicity, culture, gender or disability
- Each boarder and each member of staff is to be treated as an individual and with respect by other students and by staff
- Each boarder has a right to privacy. Boarders and staff acknowledge the right of each other to privacy
- Each boarder has the right to extend his or her intellectual growth in an atmosphere of positive encouragement and in conditions that are conducive to learning
- All boarders should be able to develop physically, spiritually, intellectually, morally and socially
- Despite the distance separating boarders from their families, links with parents are seen as an indispensable part of the support and development of boarders.

The House is a vital unit in fostering the development of the whole person and communicating positive values, creating attitudes and behaviour that allows every member of the community to flourish and feel safe and at ease. High expectations will be set and all students will be encouraged to

strive for excellence in whatever they do.

## PASTORAL CARE

### WELCOME AND INDUCTION

New boarders are welcomed to the College ahead of the start of term and before existing boarders return. House Parents are on hand to help introduce students and their families to boarding life at Prior Park. Details of the House systems, from activities to laundry, are explained to ensure all students know their way around.

### HOUSE PARENTS

St. Paul's and St. Mary's are run by House Parents. These staff are the key school figure for boarders and their role is to ensure boarders are happy and safe. House Parents provide students with a caring, comfortable and exciting 'home' at school.

### CONTACT AND INFORMATION

Students can easily contact parents using Microsoft Teams, email or mobile phones.

The House Parents should be the main point of contact for boarding parents. They will liaise with Tutors and Housemasters / Housemistresses (HsMs) as appropriate.

### HEALTH PROVISION

Prior Park College has a central Health and Wellbeing Centre. All boarders are required to register with the Centre and parents must alert us to any medical conditions and need for medication. All medication and treatment plans are administered by the Health and Wellbeing Centre.

The School Medical Officer (from the local Combe Down Medical Practice) visits the school and conducts surgeries every week.

The Health and Wellbeing Centre can also

coordinate necessary visits to the local surgery, dentists, hospital and to counsellors as required.

## DOMESTIC ARRANGEMENTS

### SECURITY

Students should keep all possessions neatly and tidily in their rooms, taking responsibility for the security of their own possessions.

The College augments personal responsibility with the following measures:

- CCTV monitoring of entrances to the school
- Monitoring of the premises by a site security manager
- Travel documents or passports should be lodged securely with the House Parent for ready access when end of term or half term comes
- Provision of lockable boxes or cupboards to secure possessions when out of the House (please provide your own padlock)
- Deposit of larger sums of money with the House banks (and locking in the House safe)
  - Duty staff ensure a security and locking procedure is completed at the end of duty
- Valuable items such as personal computers, cameras, iPads, etc, will be covered under your personal home insurance unless you opt to participate in the College insurance scheme (explained in the Community Handbook and /or Joining Instructions)

### FIRE SAFETY

Houses are equipped with extensive fire safety equipment, including smoke detectors and fire retardant doors. If a fire bell rings students must evacuate buildings. During the school day everyone gathers on the Mansion bank. Before or after the school day, people gather immediately outside their House in the specified area. Two fire drills are held every term to ensure safe compliance. Any pupil discovering a fire should shout "FIRE", activate the nearest fire alarm and leave the building.

### ACCOMMODATION AND STUDY

All areas have a bed, a wardrobe, desk space, bedside cupboard (including a lockable element), with extensive communal desk space or study facilities on the ground floor.

Younger students share rooms and senior students tend to have single study bedrooms. Students are invited to personalise and customise their space, but must give due regard to College standards (avoiding offensive material) and avoid damage to paintwork. Students are expected to take an active part in keeping rooms tidy and clean. Access to the internet is available in all Houses.

All travel and accommodation arrangements must be confirmed with House Parents by completing a Form.

### LAUNDRY

We have a fantastic domestic team who operate our laundry facilities, these are available Monday-Friday. We endeavour to return personal laundry to students the following day. Student bedding is changed once a week.

Sixth Form students can do their own washing in the boarding houses, however, this is not compulsory, they are more than welcome to use the School laundry system

should they wish.

Please ensure all clothing is labelled to ensure it is returned safely to students.

### GOING OFF-SITE

- No boarding student should leave the site without permission and all are expected to be in school or within school bounds throughout the school day
- All students will register in the morning and afternoon, Monday to Friday, and attend roll calls during the weekends
- Boarding students may seek permission to visit Bath on Saturday or Sunday afternoons. They need to request for this from the duty staff and sign out
- Mid week visits to Bath should be agreed with the House Parent

In general, students never go out alone and always go with a few friends. All must be aware of the public and personal safety; and aware of traffic, using pedestrian crossings when available.

### BOARDERS' POCKET MONEY

Parents may provide pocket money to be held by the school's Finance Department

and managed / distributed by the House Parents as required by the pupil.

Transfers can be made to the College's Boarding House Pocket Money Account by Flywire using the following link:

priorpark.flywire.com or by bank transfer to the following account:

**Barclays Bank Plc**  
**4-5 Southgate Street**  
**BATH BA1 1AQ**

**Sort code: 20-47-06**  
**Account No: 80736627**  
**Account Name: Prior Park Educational Trust**  
**IBAN GB52BARC20470680736627**  
**SWIFT CODE: BARCGB22**

Reference: Please quote the pupil code on all payments preceded by PMA (for pocket money account)

We can also hold limited amounts of cash (provided by parents for their children's pocket money) stored securely either by Finance or on site and managed / distributed by the House Parents as required by the pupil.

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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### HOW FAR ARE THE AIRPORTS FROM PRIOR PARK COLLEGE?

Bristol International is 40 minutes by road, Heathrow is 2 hours, Gatwick is 2 hours 30 minutes.

### WHICH IS THE NEAREST TRAIN STATION?

Bath Spa is our nearest mainline train station, a 5 minute taxi or bus journey.

### IF I FLY TO BRISTOL, HEATHROW, OR GATWICK, HOW DO I GET TO PRIOR PARK COLLEGE?

Prior Park provides escorted transport (at no extra cost) for boarders at the start of term from selected airports and railway stations at the start and end of each Term, provided journeys are made on the dates designated by the School for travel and on specified journeys by prior arrangement with the Transport Manager. Parents are welcome to arrange their own transport to or from Prior Park, but they will need to cover the cost.

## HOW DO I FIND MY WAY AROUND WHEN I FIRST ARRIVE?

The site is beautiful and easy to manage for students. All Houses are within the grounds and conveniently located for on-site facilities. House Parents will ensure boarders are comfortable and happy in their school home. Each new boarder is given a 'Mentor' (an older pupil or a pupil from the same year group) to care for them, and show them around.

## WHAT DO THE HOUSE PARENTS DO AND HOW OFTEN CAN I SEE HIM OR HER?

The House Parent is the head of the boarding house and manages the boarding staff and domestic team. Their role is to ensure Prior Park's boarders are happy and safe.

## WHAT DOES MY HSM AND TUTOR DO?

Your Housemaster / Housemistress (HsM) and Tutor offer pastoral care and academic guidance. Every boarder will belong to a Day House where they will mix with other boarders and day students. The HsM and Tutor oversee your academic progress and personal development.

## HOW OFTEN CAN I SEE MY PARENTS?

You can see your parents as often as you like, though most new boarders are encouraged to spend two to three weeks adjusting. Parents are welcome to visit at any time.

## IF I WANT TO GO HOME AT THE WEEKENDS, WHEN CAN I GO HOME AND WHEN CAN I COME BACK?

On the first and last weekend of term we urge boarders to stay in school for the

purpose of establishing routines, to undertake House celebrations and simply to prepare for the beginning and end of term. There is a full programme of Saturday sport (those selected must play), chapel services and weekend events and activities.

## CAN I STAY AT HALF-TERM?

Boarders can stay at Prior Park during the half-term holidays that take place in October (two weeks), February and June (one week). There is an additional cost for this which should be booked and paid for before the start of the relevant term. Please see the Fees Schedule for full details. House Parents supervise the students during half-terms and students will have access to on-site catering, facilities and a range of activities.

## CAN I USE A MOBILE PHONE?

Yes. L3-U5 are expected to hand their phone in during the school day. They are also asked to hand in their phones in over night Sunday - Thursday. Mobiles have to be registered with the House Parent and used in line with agreed conditions. 6th form are also able to opt in if they wish.

## WHEN CAN I GO OUT IF I AM BOARDING OVER THE WEEKEND?

Students have easy access to shops in Combe Down Village. In addition, the sites, shopping, cinemas, theatre and sport of the historic City of Bath are a short walk away. The school is located in beautiful parkland, which in itself offers wonderful recreation. Boarders can access Bath during the day at weekends.

## WILL I MEET DAY STUDENTS SOCIALLY AROUND SCHOOL?

Yes - all boarders will join a Day House with day students. Integration of day and boarding boys and girls is an easy, natural feature of the school life.

## WHAT ARE QUIET WEEKENDS?

On Quiet weekends there will be no sport or Saturday activities. Students are encouraged to rest, socialise with friends and, if necessary, catch up with work.

## WHAT ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE IF I AM ILL AT SCHOOL AND WILL MY PARENTS BE CONSULTED OVER MEDICAL MATTERS?

There is an on-site Health and Wellbeing Centre. The Lead Nurse and Nurses can provide nursing care at the College and can refer students to the School Medical Officer, Out of Hours Doctor's Services or the Hospital, if necessary. Where appropriate, parents are consulted over medical matters.

## WHAT PROPORTION OF BOARDING STUDENTS STAY IN SCHOOL AT THE WEEKEND?

Generally, approximately 70% of boarders are in residence over the weekend. Some weekends this figure is higher. All students are encouraged to stay on the first and last weekends of term. In addition there are generally some day students boarding for one night or longer.

## WHAT WEEKEND ACTIVITIES ARE AVAILABLE TO BOARDING STUDENTS?

On Saturday morning there is quiet study time followed by a range of about 20 different activities in our Saturday Active programme which boarders can opt for. These may include basketball, football, badminton, drama, art club, sailing, street dance, golf, yoga, chess and much more. See the Saturday Active page on the website for more information.

On Saturday afternoons students may take part or watch school sports fixtures,

followed by a match tea. On Saturday evening there is always a house social. Sixth Form students may meet friends in Bath. All boarding students attend a weekend chapel service. On Sunday afternoon students take part in activities such as tournaments, trips to theme parks, the cinema, ten-pin bowling, ice-skating and go-karting or have some free time. Many chose to catch up on prep (especially public exam groups) and there are permissions to Bath for shopping and cinema if required and appropriate. The school's Fitness Centre is also open for boarders over the weekend.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING?

### PERSONAL POSSESSIONS AND CASUAL CLOTHING-

Boarders will need the following (girls and boys):

|  |
|--|
| 1 Water bottle   |
| 1 Warm coat  |
| 1 Light waterproof coat  |
| 1 Pair of old trainers (for local walks)   |
| 1 Dressing gown  |
| 1 Pair of slippers   |
| 1 Pair flip flops (for showers)  |
| 3 Pairs of pyjamas   |
| 6 to 8 changes of underwear  |
| 2 Hand towels and flannels   |
| 2 Bath towels  |
| A small number of casual clothes for free time - 4-5 outfits. Storage space is limited so boarders should not bring more than 2 suitcases.                     |
| 1 smarter outfit is required for Sunday mass, e.g., non-ripped jeans and a shirt with shoes that are not trainers.   |
| Students can bring their own duvet, but the College can supply (at no cost) if required. The College will supply a pillow, pillowcase, sheet, and duvet cover. |

**List continues overleaf**

|   |
|---|
| Shoe cleaning equipment   |
| A hairbrush or comb   |
| Nail clippers or scissors   |
| A supply of name tapes  |
| Adaptors – these must be EU/UK products   |
| Spare chargers for phones and laptops<br>(kettles and cooking devices are prohibited)                     |
| Alarm clock with batteries if needed<br>(students below the sixth form do not have their phone overnight) |
| Headphones for listening to a phone call or music in private.   |
| Pictures to decorate your room.<br>Only battery-operated fairy lights are permitted.                      |

### SHOULD I LABEL MY POSSESSIONS?

Yes, please ensure all personal belongings, such as clothes, towels and bedding, that you bring with you have name-tags on them. You should also bring extra name labels with you for use by the laundry room staff.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

### GUARDIANS

Students from overseas must have a guardian resident in England, ideally within an hour of Prior Park College. The guardian should be readily available for consultation in the case of emergency. We advise that a guardian should not be a person of student age in the course of Higher Education.

The guardian must be appointed by the parents and any change of guardian notified immediately.

### IPADS, LAPTOPS AND GAMING DEVICES

We strongly advise against students bringing in items such as iPads, personal laptops and gaming devices. The students are provided with a school laptop for work and

in each boarding house there are gaming devices and access to TV's with streaming services. In our experience these devices make it more difficult for students to build relationships and deter them from taking us up on the opportunities we are offering.

### END OF TERM

Boarders are expected to go directly home at the end of term or at half-term. Exceptions to this rule must be sought by parents in writing to the Headmaster, at least one week in advance. Overseas boarders should note that all travel plans should avoid disrupting the normal routines of the school.

### TRAVEL

We advise that long haul students leave no earlier than 48hrs before the end of the term and short haul 24hrs. We provide a minibus to and from the airport at the beginning and end of each term. If you would like to organise a taxi you can do through [transport@priorparkschools.com](mailto:transport@priorparkschools.com) - you must be 14 and over to use this service. Anyone below 14 must be collected by a guardian if not using the minibus.

### THE COMMUNITY HANDBOOK

Further information about Prior Park College can be found in our Community Handbook. It can be accessed on the 'Admissions' section of the website [www.priorparkcollege.com](http://www.priorparkcollege.com)

### WHERE CAN I FIND FURTHER INFORMATION?

You will find lots more information and news stories on our website - [www.priorparkschools.com](http://www.priorparkschools.com)

If you have any further questions, please email the Admissions team, who will either answer your query, or put you in touch with the relevant person within the College - [admissions.ppc@priorparkschools.com](mailto:admissions.ppc@priorparkschools.com)





Prior Park  
College

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Part of the Prior Park Schools family