



# FITNESS FOR BOARDING POLICY

*This policy refers to Wellington Senior School*

Head	Alex Battison
Author	Simon Costello – Head of Boarding Sam Dean – Designated Safeguarding Lead Sarah Pattermore – Lead Nurse
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## Rationale

Boarding is able to offer many opportunities for learning and development for pupils, but the School needs to ensure that we can properly look after all boarders in our care. Various factors may lead staff to question whether it is appropriate for a pupil to be accommodated within boarding. Such factors may include:

- A concern over whether boarding is in the best interests of the pupil and/or other pupils in their House and the wider boarding community.
- Whether the School can reasonably accommodate or make adjustments for a pupil's health, behavioural or pastoral needs.
- Whether the boarding environment is able to keep a pupil safe, with reasonable measures put in place.
- Whether the pupil is able to exercise responsibility in areas such as engaging with medical support; participating cooperatively in school and boarding life; following care plans and safety plans.

Any decision made in this circumstance is **not a disciplinary response** (disciplinary issues would be dealt with in line with the Promoting Good Behaviour Policy) but a recognition that a boarding community is a unique setting, with staff *in loco parentis* to a significant number of pupils, and so a very high level of pupil need cannot always be met.

## Initial Assessment

If information comes to light that leads staff to question whether a pupil is fit to board, an initial assessment is made. Several factors influence how this assessment is made, such as the nature of boarding structures (rooms, staffing, routines), the nature of the concern, the School's duty of care towards the pupil, other pupils or staff, current professional guidelines, statutory obligations, (to include, where applicable, the Equality Act 2010) and the physical environment of boarding. It will often be necessary to consider information and input to the assessment from other sources both within and outside of the School. Such sources may include but are not limited to:

- If there is a physical or mental health element, advice from the Health Centre is usually sought in the first instance. It may also be appropriate to seek verbal or written opinion from the school GP, or any hospital consultant, psychiatrist, psychologist or other healthcare professionals involved in the care of the pupil.

- If there is a Safeguarding element, advice from the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) or a DDSL is sought. In some instances, it may also be appropriate to seek external advice from relevant external education safeguarding officers or social care professionals.

In all cases, the assessment is discussed between relevant members of the School's Leadership Team before any conclusion is reached as to next steps. In the majority of instances, any concerns will thereafter be addressed and resolved informally with appropriate support and guidance being put in place.

Where a pupil is deemed to be unsuitable for boarding, they are expected to return home or be cared for by a guardian, in line with the Guardianship Policy and Agreement. Due consideration will be given as to how this move can be made safely and successfully given the reasons why a pupil is unsuitable for boarding, and support will be given by the House team. However, the responsibility for this ultimately lies with the parent and/or guardian.

In limited circumstances, the temporary removal of the pupil from the boarding environment pending a full review may be appropriate.

If the initial assessment needs to be made outside office hours, staff should err on the side of caution in their decision, and review with the appropriate colleagues at the next possible opportunity. In these situations, more intensive supervision in a separate area, such as the Health Centre, may be an appropriate environment for the pupil. However, this is not an appropriate long-term solution given its limited capacity, the extra staff levels needed, and the needs of other pupils.

It is sometimes but not always appropriate for a pupil to continue to attend lessons as a day pupil whilst they are away from the boarding environment, and due consideration will be given to this as part of any decision on suitability for boarding.

### **Full Review Procedure**

A fuller review will be necessary if informal resolution is not deemed appropriate and/or if the pupil has been temporarily removed from boarding. This assessment may require input from other professionals, such as the School's Mental Health Lead, a GP or external medical or mental health specialist. The advice from these professionals feeds into an assessment process undertaken by the School that considers the child's needs and what the School is safely and reasonably able to provide in terms of support and adjustments. The timing of this review will vary depending on the reason for absence, recovery or improvements, and the speed of obtaining information from external sources. Although parents or the pupil may sometimes wish to 'get back to normal' as quickly as possible, it is in the best interests of all

concerned that a full picture is gathered and evaluated in a balanced way to ensure the correct decision is made.

Issues that a review is likely to consider include, but are not limited to:

- Mental health
- Self-harming
- Suicidal ideation
- Meeting basic milestones i.e. unable to self-care
- Eating disorders
- Medical conditions that require significant care, or that a pupil is not managing well
- Inability to live in group situations
- The effect of a pupil's behaviour on other boarders

If the pupil has been temporarily removed from boarding following the initial assessment, the outcome of the review will usually be that the pupil:

- returns to boarding with a plan of support in place; or
- has a phased return to boarding with a plan of support in place; or
- remains as a day pupil, possibly with a plan for a further review in due course, (subject, where applicable, to visa restrictions - please see below).

If it is not viable for them to remain as a day pupil, because of either practical constraints or visa restrictions, then we would look to support them moving to an environment that is better able to support them in their education.

If the School has been able to reasonably accommodate the pupil remaining in boarding pending the outcome of the review, the outcome will usually be that the pupil either:

- remains in boarding, on a temporary or permanent basis, with a plan of support in place, (and with regular reviews thereafter); or
- leaves boarding but remains as a day pupil, (subject, where applicable, to visa restrictions - please see below) usually with a plan for a future review should the pupil wish to return to boarding in the future.

At all times, the School will maintain frequent contact with parents and guardians to explain the situation, and the predicted timeframe for a review. Especially for older pupils, we also have to be mindful of respecting the pupil's right to privacy under UK law.

## **Considerations for International Pupils**

International pupils who are temporarily unable to board and are subject to immigration control, may, within the terms of their visa, reside with their Guardian for a short time (up to a maximum of 27 consecutive nights) and, if possible, attend the School as a day pupil. After this time, the pupil must do one of the following actions;

- return to boarding if it is possible for them to do so;
- return to their home country for further recovery;
- if under 16, and with the agreement of the School, the pupil enters a private fostering arrangement as directed by the local authority. This requires a process involving parents, the foster family, the School and the local authority.

As a visa sponsor, the School must notify UKVI of any change in a pupil's care arrangements within 10 working days e.g. private fostering arrangements or independent living arrangements.

Due to visa restrictions, international pupils under 16 cannot bring family members (dependants) to reside with them in the UK, unless they have a parent or relative in the UK that has a British or settled visa status.

An exception to the above is possible if the pupil is under the age of 12 or has siblings below the age of 12 currently in a school in the UK, and whose parent resides in the UK under a Parent of a Child Pupil Visa.

In all cases, advice should be gained from the School's visa advisor before any arrangement is made.

Please note, the above terms of visa sponsorship, by which the School must abide, are accurate at the time of writing. In the event that these rules change, the School would have to abide by the current rules in place, as defined by UKVI.

In the event that a pupil is removed, either temporarily or permanently, from boarding, the School will implement such support and adjustments as it reasonably can do in order to seek to meet the needs of the pupil and their family. Measures may include:

- meetings between the pupil and/or parents and Guardian with pastoral staff and senior staff;
- support from the pupil's tutor around how to explain the pupil's absence to friends;
- counselling in person or remotely;
- ongoing support with medical appointments and referrals;

- help with travel arrangements;
- assistance in keeping up with academic work, or catching the pupil up, on their return, depending on the circumstances;
- facilitation of interaction with peers in order to minimise as far as possible any feelings of isolation the pupil may feel.

If a parent is unhappy with how their child's absence has been handled, they are entitled to complain using the School Complaints Procedure, which is available to view on the School website. normal procedure