

# The Duchess's Community High School



## Basic Information for Parents

2008-9

*Striving for success for all*



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# Welcome!

Welcome to The Duchess's Community High School. We understand that moving to a new school can be a bewildering time of getting to know new people and places. To try and help you to settle, we have put together this pack of information. We hope that you find it useful.

## Mission Statement:

 Our school aims to generate in all of its students, the confidence, adaptability, and sheer enjoyment of learning that is so essential for lifelong success in the 21st Century. We want every member of the school community to feel valued and have a role to play. We want the school to be a centre of excellence where everyone is committed to pursuing their own personal learning goals in a safe and supportive environment. Equally, we recognise our vital contribution to the local area in generating a thriving community where emotional and creative development is at the forefront. 

In its simplest term:

- Our vision is to be an outstanding school
- Our goal is to make our school a great place to learn for everyone.

We aim to:

- Equip everyone with the desire and motivation to get the most out of their learning opportunities
- Give everyone, through our Technology College status, the opportunity to acquire the skills and understanding to cope with, benefit fully from, and contribute to the development of an increasingly technological world.
- Give everyone the chance to achieve their personal learning goals through a broad and well balanced curriculum; including extra curriculum provision.
- Encourage high levels of personal responsibility, respect, maturity, and co operation.
- Generate a sense of moral and spiritual awareness so leading to a more mature and emotionally stable community.

# The School: Routines

## Timings

Registration/Assembly	8.55am
1st Lesson	9.10am
2nd Lesson	10.00am
Morning Break	10.55 to 11.20am
3rd Lesson	11.20am
4th Lesson	12.10pm
Lunch Break	1.05 to 1.50pm
5th Lesson	1.50pm
6th Lesson	2.40pm
School Ends (on Wednesdays school ends 2.40pm)	3.35pm

There are normally six lessons in the school day – two before morning break, two between break and lunch and two in the afternoon.

Students arriving late must report to either of the reception offices. Parents wishing to contact the school may do so between 8.15am and 4.30pm (4.00pm on Fridays).

On Wednesdays students finish at 2.40pm to allow time for Staff Curriculum Development.

## Absence

Parents are asked to inform us as soon as possible if a student is not well enough to come to school. A telephone call or a note sent in with a brother, sister, or neighbour on the first day of absence is ideal. There is a page in the school planner for parents to record and sign details of any absence This should be completed in the day that the student returns to school..

Permission for absence for reasons other than illness should be sought from the Director of Learning.

## Illness & Accident

The school provides first aid facilities and a small sick bay. Students who become ill at school will be cared for whilst parents are asked to come to school to collect them.

In the case of accidents to students, a wide range of responses may be needed, from calling out the emergency services to dealing with minor first aid. It is essential that we have emergency contact telephone numbers, ideally for both parents. Where parents are often difficult to contact, or both work a long way from school, the numbers of other appropriate people, e.g. grandparents, can be helpful. Students needing urgent hospital treatment will be transported by ambulance. If non-urgent hospital treatment is needed, we will contact parents and ask them to arrange it.

We hope that you will understand that only in exceptional circumstances will school staff escort students to hospital for non-urgent treatment. However, in cases of emergency hospitalisation by ambulance, school staff will remain at hospital with all students under 16 years of age, and with older students who need support, until parents can get there.

## Medical

We need to know about medical conditions which may affect a student's well-being in school and parents will be asked for this information. Medical and dental inspections are carried out in the medical room at school, parents having been informed in advance.

### **Data Protection and School Health Service**

*For many years schools and the School Health and Dental Services have worked together to ensure that all children in school are offered immunisation, health and dental surveillance, advice and support. To do this the School Health and Dental Services need population databases – an up-to-date list of all children attending school. These are used to provide programmes, including immunisation against tuberculosis (BCG) and meningitis C and dental, hearing and vision screening. In response to changes in the Data Protection Act we are required to ensure that parents know that the school gives your child's name, address and date of birth to the School Health and Dental Services for this purpose. **This information will be shared unless you advise the Head Teacher in writing that you do not wish this to happen.** Information about the services offered by School Health and Dentist are detailed in the information leaflet that you will have received when your child started school. Further copies, if required, can be obtained from the school nurse. Please note that no immunisation or dental work is carried out without a signed consent form from the parent or guardian.*

## School Meals

School meals are provided on a self-service basis. A wide range of choice is available: two or three course meals or snacks, whichever are preferred. Students entitled to free school meals may select items to the current value of a standard meal. Any student may bring a packed lunch to school.

## Lunchtime

All main school (Years 9, 10 & 11) are expected to stay on the premises at lunchtime unless they go home for lunch. Parents are asked to write to school each time they wish their children to do an errand in town, in which case a town pass will be given for that day. In the interest of safety and order we encourage the co-operation of parents in ensuring that this procedure is strictly adhered to. Sixth Form students have the privilege of taking lunch at school, at home, or in town.

## Transport

Students who travel by bus are issued with bus passes by the Local Education Authority Transport Department if they live more than three miles from school. We ask parents to stress to their children the need for good behaviour when journeying to and from school. The bus pass must be shown to the driver every time students travel to or from school. If the pass is not shown, they will have to pay until the pass is produced. Replacement bus passes are available at a cost from 'school transport' at County Hall in Morpeth (01670 533000 – ask for school transport).

## Personal Property

Money and valuables should never be left in school-bags or coat pockets. Items may be handed to the school office or to a teacher for safe-keeping. Items of personal property and clothing should be clearly named.

## Equipment Required

All students must have the following basic items – a pen, pencil, eraser, ruler and preferably a calculator. For items of clothing please refer to the section on school uniform.

## Lost Property

Enquiries about lost property should be directed to the main school office. Items found should also be taken there. The school does not accept responsibility for lost items but we will gladly help with problems, provided sensible precautions have been taken.

## Fire Emergency

Fire and emergency evacuation procedure is practised each term. The assembly point in case of emergency evacuation is the all-weather hockey pitch.

## Student Planners

All students are provided with a professionally printed planner or diary, which provides spaces for timetables, homework timetables, the daily noting of homework tasks and simple communications between staff and parents. Parents are asked to sign the planners each weekend and they are then countersigned by tutors at registration on Mondays. A charge is made for replacement planners that have been lost or destroyed without good reason.

## Assembly

All students, unless parents request otherwise, attend Assemblies, taken by the Director of Students Services and outside speakers. There are also occasional presentations by the Head or Deputy Heads. Where assemblies have a religious content, parents have the right to withdraw their children. In such cases parents should first write to the Director of Learning. There is a schedule that parents can see if they wish.

# The Curriculum

The School applies the National Curriculum across years 9 - 11. Key Stage 3 attainment is measured late in year 9 (SATS); GCSE examinations are taken at the end of Year 11.

The curriculum provides a broad and balanced education for life in a rapidly changing world. It provides a sound basis for employment and Further and Higher Education.

## Year 9 (Key Stage 3)

All students study English (including Drama), Mathematics, Science, Information & Communications Technology, Design & Technology (including Food and Textiles Technology), History, Geography, Art, Music, Physical Education, French and/or German, Religious Education, Citizenship and Personal, Health & Social Education including Careers Education. Provision is made for students with learning difficulties.

On the basis of KS2 SATs and assessments made in Middle Schools students are put into sets according to their ability. These setting arrangements are continuously reviewed during the year with formal review exercises at the ends of November and February; changes are made where appropriate.

## Homework Requirements

Students in Year 9 receive 12 homeworks per week of approximately 20 minutes each.

Homework is an important and necessary requirement since it enables students to accomplish more work than they could otherwise do and helps develop self-discipline.

Homework is assessed according to a marking policy common to all subjects. In addition to any grading that indicates the absolute level of a student's attainment, we have established a series of grades from A to E that indicate the level of effort and commitment shown by the student. "A" indicates that the work in question demonstrates the highest standard that might reasonably be expected of the individual, while "E" indicates that work is well below the standard expected of the group. Thus, students in all sets can be rewarded by top grades.

## Religious Education

Religious Education aims to promote students' moral and spiritual development by giving them the chance to reflect on their own beliefs and the beliefs of others. This sort of study develops a range of academic skills, including the ability to reflect, empathise and explore, as well as to challenge the views of others with sensitivity.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from RE, but we do request that parents should first write to the Head of RE and then to meet with him to discuss the issues involved.

## Special Educational Needs

Students who have special educational needs are particularly welcome at this school. Students with special educational needs are encouraged to work to their full potential being taught and, if appropriate, supported, in mainstream classes by qualified teachers and learning support assistants.

Parents of students with special educational needs are invited to discuss any concerns they may have with Mr Adamson (Director of Student Services), Mrs McDonald (Inclusion Manager for Supported Students), or Mrs Quinlan (SENCO – responsibility for statemented students).

## Arrangements for admitting disabled students

We welcome students with disabilities within the constraints of our split site school. Provision for disabled students has been improved on our main site. There are three disabled toilets, two parking spaces with lowered kerbs and ramps. We also have an internal wheelchair lifts to allow access to the ICT, Food, Textiles and Technology departments.

Extensive research has concluded that it is not feasible to adapt the Bailiffgate site further. There is a stairlift to allow access to the sixth form common room, but the rest of the site remains unsuitable for students with severe mobility problems.

Future plans include improved access to the sports hall. Each application is considered individually and decisions are made on the basis of the student's individual needs.

## Sex and Relationships Education

Education in respect of sexual matters is carried out for all students, mainly through the programme of study for Citizenship/PHSE. Our framework allows for the matter to be discussed openly, honestly and respectfully, acknowledging fully differing attitudes and values. Our approach will very much follow guidelines provided by the government in their document 'Sex and Relationship Education Guidance' (2000), available from the DfES.

The school teaching staff will be supported in the delivery of aspects of SRE by a range of outside visitors including the school nurse, health visitors, youth workers, midwives and representatives from the local church.

Parents will be informed in writing when students are about to embark on aspects of SRE and will have the right to withdraw their son/daughter from lessons as considered appropriate.

A more detailed sexual health policy is available in school. Mr G Adamson, is available to discuss any matters of concern.

# Pastoral Care

## Year System

The pastoral care of the students is based on a Year System.

On entry to the school at 13+ students are allocated to a tutor group. The students will usually stay with a particular Form Tutor until they enter the Sixth Form. Students are also in one of three Houses for the purpose of inter-House competitions.

There is a Director of Learning for each of the five years, who together with the Tutors and the Director of Student Services, is responsible for all aspects of a student's welfare. Regular contact is kept with the Medical Officer of Health, the Educational Welfare Officer and the Social Services.

## Students' Progress

### General

It is the work of the Form Tutor and Director of Learning to monitor each student's progress and to take any necessary action when it is not satisfactory. To this end, Tutors meet their students on a regular basis to discuss their position, set targets and help them to meet objectives.

### Reviews

Periodic reviews of each student's progress in all subjects are carried out and if there is cause for concern then parents are contacted.

## Three Ways Forward

'Three Ways Forward' is a series of statements designed to help everyone in the school community understand their responsibilities towards each other. It takes a positive stance on the question of how best to strive for the success of all our students. It addresses the three main influences on a student's life: students themselves, parents/carers and school staff. The language of the document is entirely and deliberately positive. It is a conscious move away from 'school rules' which are often just lists of 'thou shalt nots'! The aim is to engage the students' brains and judgements so that they can recognise inappropriate behaviour, talk about it and come up with positive solutions. In other words it allows

them an active role in improving their behaviour or attitude. Furthermore, the document sets out our professional stall. We need to show respect to our students, design our lessons to be active, engaging and inclusive and keep each other as well as parents/carers informed about the progress/regress of our charges. Unquestionably it is staff who have the biggest part to play here.

Finally, parents/carers have a key role. To include the family in supporting teaching and learning, behaviour and expectations is vital for a school. The document covers the everyday ways in which a parent/carer can support his/her child – diary signing, responding to letters from school, ensuring good attendance and punctuality etc. This is all largely common sense: simple psychology tells us that people respond best to praise, encouragement and fairness. We want to err on the positive, whilst recognising that poor behaviour needs a firm, clear, consistent and caring hand.

## THREE WAYS FORWARD

### Students

#### Respect

We respect people's rights to teach, to learn, to speak, to be heard, to be included and to feel safe and secure. We also respect our environment.

#### Equipment

We bring the right equipment, books and homework. Everything else we put away in our bags.

#### Attitude

We join in, do our best and help each other.

#### Punctuality

We arrive on time, ready to start the lesson.

#### School uniform

We wear only the agreed clothing, shoes and jewellery.

### Parents/Carers

#### Attendance

We ensure that our child attends school. We ring school on the first day of any absence and provide a signed, dated note on the first day back.

#### Behaviour

We encourage our child to show respect to both teaching and support staff, fellow pupils and members of the public.

#### Communication

We communicate relevant aspects of school or family life likely to affect our child's progress, behaviour, attendance or wellbeing. (This information will be treated in confidence.)

#### Information

We read and reply promptly to all necessary communications from school, and check and sign the diary weekly.

#### Organisation

We ensure that our child is organised, equipped, properly dressed and punctual.

### Staff

#### Respect

We show our students respect and consistency in the ways we teach them, address them, listen to them, reward them and discipline them. We are sensitive to their backgrounds, their circumstances and the level of support they need.

#### Lessons

We plan our lessons so that they are clear, organised, inclusive, varied and active.

#### Marking

We offer clear, regular, written or verbal feedback to support students' learning.

#### Rewards/Sanctions

We reward effort, attainment, good behaviour, homework, attendance and punctuality whenever possible and we use consistent sanctions when necessary.

#### Information

We use student feedback and data to inform our teaching. And we provide accessible information to students, parents/carers, HoYs, HoDs and tutors about progress, grades, exam requirements, rewards/sanctions, behaviour, homework, attendance and punctuality.

# Parents and the School

## Contacts

Parents of new students are invited to meet a senior member of staff in mid-September. In October there will be a consultation day to review progress. In January/February there is a Year 9 evening to explain the Year 10 GCSE courses. Towards the end of the Spring Term there will be a further consultation day.

## Reports

In addition to the consultation days, parents will receive regular updates on the progress of their son or daughter towards attainment of targets.

## The Friends of the Duchess's Community High School

This is an organisation of parents, friends and staff who organise events throughout the year. The Friends of the Duchess's Community High School exists as a fund-raising body but also as a means of bringing together parents, students and teachers in an informal setting.

All parents are automatically members of this association and have a right to take part in all of the events.

## General

The home and school need to work together and therefore parents are encouraged to come into school to meet the staff and discuss any matter which concerns them. It is advisable to make an appointment as staff teaching commitments do not always make them available at a moment's notice. Newsletters are sent out at frequent intervals and parents are invited to let us know their views about any of the matters raised. A Home-School Agreement sets out the expectations of the School, the parents/guardians and the students. All families receive a copy and are encouraged (though not required) to sign it.

## Parental Contributions

We have a scheme through which parents make an entirely voluntary charitable donation of £3 per term to support the school's extracurricular programmes.

Recent examples of opportunities which these contributions have provided include:

- equipping the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
- financing the rebirth of school drama
- purchasing musical instruments
- supporting multiple minor projects, such as the Shell Mileage Marathon
- providing strips for sports teams
- providing small subsidies to numerous students in financial difficulty, to enable them to take part.

## The Duchess's High School Trust

A parallel scheme, with precisely the same aims as the Parental Contribution scheme, exists for parents who wish to contribute more substantially by covenant to the school's activities, as part of their charitable giving. Currently donations to the above trust range from £5 a month to £500 per annum.

New students will be given further details about these schemes.

# Uniform

## Uniform (Years 9, 10 & 11)

**Navy blue polo shirt** with School badge  
*(Available from Foresters of Alnwick).*

**Navy blue sweatshirt** with School badge  
*(Available from Foresters of Alnwick).*

**Navy blue zip-up top/school hoodie** with School badge  
*(Available for direct purchase from the School).*

**Trousers:** Plain, pressed formal black (not denim, corduroy, 'baggy' hipster or casual).

**Skirt:** Girls may wear plain, black knee length skirt).

**Socks or Tights:** Plain white, grey or black.

**Shoes:** Plain black leather (suede or leather look), low heeled shoes (not 'trainers' or canvas finish).

### Optional

**Navy blue fleece top** with School badge  
*(Available from Foresters of Alnwick).*

*Full Uniform is expected during examinations.*

## Girls' PE kit

**Black and Red Banded Reversible Hockey/Rugby shirt.**

**White Aertex shirt** with school crest  
(Indoor and summer activities)

**Black wrap-round skirt** (optional)

**Black shorts or gym knickers**

**Red Football/Hockey socks**

**White ankle socks** (Indoor and summer activities)

**Training shoes** (must be non-marking sole)

**Black tracksuit trousers** for outdoors in winter.

## Boys' PE kit

**Navy/Black shorts.**

**Black and Red Banded Reversible Rugby shirt**

**Red football socks**

**Football/rugby boots**

**Training shoes** (must be non-marking sole).

Whatever is worn should be worn 'normally'. Sanctions will be applied to students not in uniform as outlined above.

## Please note

**Make-up** should be discrete at all times. Students will be asked to remove excessive make-up. **NO jewellery** is permitted except for a wrist watch, small signet-type ring and 1 ear stud (silver or gold metal) in each lobe. Eye brow, nose, tongue and lip jewellery is not permitted.

**Outer Garments** must be intended for outdoor use only; pullovers, non-uniform sweatshirts etc. are not permitted. Likewise hats are only permitted if it is raining or very cold and should be removed upon entry in to the school. Training shoes are not permitted and should be removed upon entry in to school, except during PE sessions. Knee length boots should not be worn.

**Hair Colour** must be natural. Streaks and coloured overtones are only acceptable if the colours are natural; even then extremes are not permitted e.g. black hair with blonde streaks or 3 contrasting colours.

## General

All items of school uniform should be clearly marked with the student's name.

PE and Games kit should be kept in a named bag and not left on school premises when not in use.

## Consequences

Students in breach of school rules regarding uniform without explanatory notes are likely to be placed in the inclusion room in the first instance. If in doubt, please contact the school for clarification.

## The School and the Community

### **The Duchess's High School is a Community School.**

Wide ranging educational and recreational activities are organised which seek to recognise and respond to the life long learning needs of the community which we serve.

The award of Technology College Status and the funding attached to this has made it possible to provide increased access to IT for students, young and old.

A commitment to providing for the local community through offering our facilities for use by the community. Both the Main School site and Lindisfarne Community Annexe are used as a home base for a wide range of community groups

A strong youth work programme which includes the management and running of youth clubs, youth classes and most recently, extensive support work with individuals and small groups of students within school.

A thriving and expanding Duke of Edinburgh Award provision with over 100 students participating at Bronze, Silver and Gold levels.

The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities for working within the community. Some examples are given below.

Sixth Form students have a well developed Community Service and Charities Programme, run by Sixth Form students which continues to raise outstanding sums of money for local, national and international charities.

Our Citizenship/PHSE programme has been developed in consultation with external agencies who contribute extensively to its delivery.

A successful programme of Work Experience enables students and staff to meet and work alongside the local community.

Our work as an Extended School has provided opportunities to develop a range of services for children and young people, families and the community. Our aim is to make services for children and young people joined up, as called for in 'Every Child Matters'.

We have a vision of educational provision which is responsive to local need. It will help to strengthen our role in the development of Alnwick as a "learning community".

## Duke of Edinburgh's Award

Bronze, Silver and Gold awards have been available for many years. Students can get involved in Year 9 with Bronze and can carry on through to Gold in their final year of Sixth Form.

## School Trips

A wide range of educational and recreational visits is offered to students, in addition to curriculum-related day trips in term time. Last year there were Year 11 and Year 12 Geography trips to the Lake District, Year 13 Urban Geography Day in Newcastle, Year 9 History Trip to Beamish, Year 12 Biology visit to Ford Castle, Geography & Science Conferences in Newcastle, a History Department visit to the First World War Battlefield in Flanders, a Music Department trip to Canada, an Oxbridge Conference, a Sociology Trip, a Year 12 DNA Science Workshop, at and Y9 DNA Practical and Chemistry explosions at Sunderland University.

## Complaints Procedure

A "Complaints Procedure" produced by the Local Education Authority and adopted by the School's Governing Body exists and any parents who wish to have recourse to the details may do so on request to the Headteacher.

## Key Staff for Year 9

### Director Of Learning:

**Year 9** Mrs E Drummond, B.Ed., PGCE

### Director of Student Services:

Mr G Adamson, MBE, B.A.(Hons), PGCE

### Pastoral Administrator:

Mrs L Coxford

### Curriculum Staff

#### English

Head of Department Mr M Allenby, B.A.(Hons), PGCE

#### Mathematics

Head of Department Miss J M Baker, MMathstat, PGCE

#### I.T. Co-ordinator

Head of Department Mrs S Coull, B.Sc., GTP

#### Science

Head of Science Miss N Richardson B.Sc. (Hons), PGCE

#### Languages

Head of Department Mrs C Brown B.A. (Hons), PGCE

Head of German Mr I Brown, B.A., PGCE

#### Geography

Head of Department Ms L Smith, B.Sc (Hons), PGCE

#### History

Head of Department Mr M Booth, B.A., PGCE

#### Religious Studies

Head of Department Mr L Spence, B.A., PGCE

#### Technology

Head of Faculty of Design & Technology Mrs D Murphy, B.A. (Hons), PGCE

**Art and Design**

Head of Department

**Ms R. Brown** B.A. (Hons)**Music**

Head of Department

**Mr A. Scott**, B.A. (Hons), M.A. PGCE**Citizenship**

Head of Department

**Mr B Dunn**, B.A. (Hons), PGCE**P.E.**

Head of Boys' P.E.

**Mr A A Jenkins**, Cert.Ed.

Head of Girls' P.E.

**Miss F Grant**, B.A., PGCE**Business Studies/Politics & Law**

Head of Department

**Miss R Harle**, B.A. (Hons), PGCE**Learning Support**

Head of Department

**Mrs A Quinlan**, B.Ed. (Hons), Adv.Dip.SEN.**Support Staff**

Behaviour Manager

**Mrs A Hayes**

Family Support Worker

**Mrs J Greaves****Additional Information****Head****Mr M R Hall**, BA Hons (Oxon), MEd**Deputy Headteacher****Mr S Handley**, BA (Hons), PGCE**Deputy Headteacher****Mr M Lock**, B.Sc. (Hons)**The School**

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**Fax:****Alnwick (01665) 510602****e-mail:****Admin@dchs-alnwick.org**