



Wycliffe

Parent Guide to Academic Life

August 2023

“

We teach our pupils the study skills and habits they need for life, to develop resilience and confidence in their learning, and seek to engender a love of education.

”

This guide is intended to answer many of the questions that we find new parents will have with regard to the academic side of the school. Please keep it handy to refer to in your time as a Wycliffe parent but also feel free to ask us for clarification on any point. You will be sent additional information and detail about the various events and processes mentioned herein as each year progresses.

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Getting Started – Before You Arrive

Wycliffe's reputation for its pastoral care and concern for the individual is well founded. There may be some anxiety before moving from your child's current school into the Senior School at Wycliffe, whether it is from another secondary school or a Prep School. Very soon though you will find that you will all be wrapped up in the busy schedule of Wycliffe life and it will seem like you have been part of the family forever.

Please let us know if there are likely to be any barriers to your child's success. If we are aware, we can do something. If we are not, we cannot. For general pastoral issues, your child's Housemaster or Housemistress should be first point of contact. For academic issues, your child's Tutor is the first point of contact.

Expectations – What Do I need?

Pupils are expected to arrive at each lesson with all the required equipment. Being fully equipped represents a clear statement of intent in preparing for lessons and helps develop the right mindset for learning. As well as any subject-specific requirements, the **minimum** expectation is that pupils arrive ready to learn with the following:

- *A4 lined paper*
- *Pens*
- *Pencils*
- *30cm ruler*
- *Fully-charged IT device*
- *Ring binders and files for that subject*
- *Text books for that subject*
- *Calculator and set of Mathematical instruments (for Mathematics and Science lessons).*

We also advise the use of subject dividers in files, and different coloured ball pens and pencils, and highlighters for annotation and mark-up.

We will issue a pocket-sized Pupil Handbook and Calendar every term that must be carried to lessons.

In line with our Bring Your Own Recommended Device strategy, all pupils should have the requisite technology with them that meets the minimum specifications. For more information on this please visit <https://wycliffeilearn.fireflycloud.net/>

Pupils need to have a working charger in school so that their device is always charged when they arrive at lessons.

The Working Day

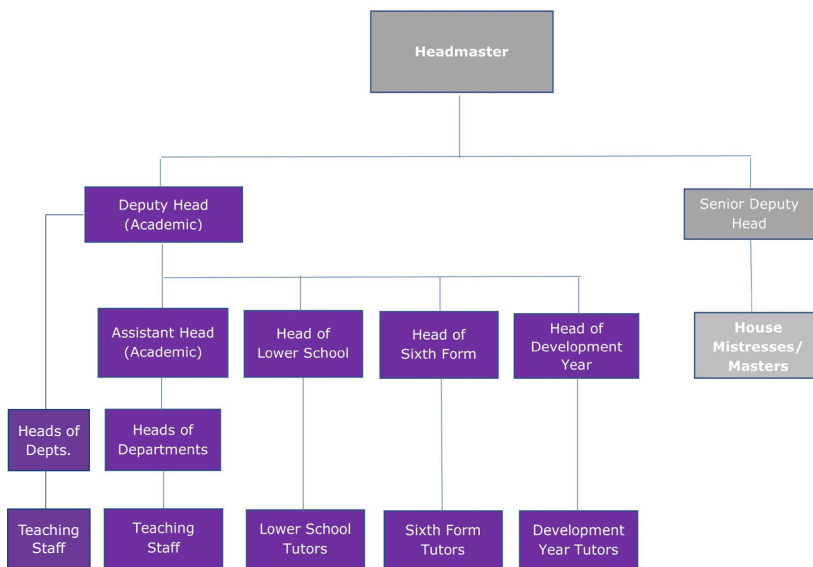
Pupils will be issued with individual timetables. Parents can see their child’s timetables on the Parent Portal, iParent app, and our online academic portal, Firefly. The day starts with registration in Houses at 8:15am. Pupils need to be in school in good time to be prepared for this and for the day ahead, with the first sessions starting at 8:30am. Whilst lessons end at 4:10pm, after-school activities will vary pupil-by-pupil and year group-by-year group. Parents are advised to note that the first formal prep session takes place in all Houses and for all pupils between 5:30pm and 6:30pm (when School Buses then depart and the ‘Supper Hour’ for Boarders begins). We strongly recommended that Day pupils stay in school until at least then unless a different/earlier pick-up time either suits a family’s particular schedule or allows a pupil to fulfil a separate out-of-school commitment.

Example Timetable

Period	Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat		
	8.15	Registration in Houses							
	8.30	Assembly	Chapel	Chapel	Chapel	Congregational Practice / House meetings	(P1 - 08.30)		
1	08.50	Tutorial					(P2 – 09.20)		
2	09.40						(Break 10.05)		
	10.25	Break						(P3 - 10.30)	
3	10.50						(P4 - 11.20)		
4	11.40						Lunch (12.05)		
	12.25	Lunch							
	13.35	Registration in Houses							
5	13.45				Games		Games		
6	14.35								
7	15.25								
	16.10	Lessons end							
	16.30 - 17.30	Activities							
	17.45	Prep 1	Prep 1	Prep 1	Prep 1	Prep 1			
	18.30	Supper / Buses depart							
	19.30	Prep 2	Prep 2	Prep 2	Prep 2				
		To end no earlier than 20.30							

Who's Who? A Guide to Academic Roles

A brief outline of the key academic roles is shown in the organisation chart below. In almost every conceivable circumstance, the best person to contact first on an academic matter is your child's Tutor. They can then ensure that the right person to deal with the issue is contacted, if that person is not them, and they will retain an oversight of all matters affecting your child's performance and progress. Email is probably the best way to make first contact. Of course, if you wish to telephone you can do so but teachers are rarely available 'on demand' and so an email outlining the issues and asking for a call back or a meeting is often the best course of action. You will receive an email from the Tutor in the first few days of term introducing themselves and providing contact details.



Deputy Head (Academic) – Sean Dunne



Mr Dunne has overall responsibility for all matters relating to teaching and learning in the Senior School. This includes the appointment of staff, the establishment of curriculum and teaching principles and practice, the monitoring of teaching standards, the analysis of exam performance, timetabling, data analysis, the line management of heads of academic departments, and the creation of policies relating to teaching and learning. Mr Dunne leads the Academic Leadership Team which includes Peter Martin, Matt Archer and Sarah Collinson.

Head of Sixth Form – Matt Archer



Mr Archer's role can be summarised as seeking to ensure that every pupil in Year 12 and 13 is able to secure access to the route beyond school that is most realistically attainable, whilst setting high aspirations and expectations, and creating a culture of community amongst the Sixth Form. In doing so Mr Archer manages the University application processes, and oversees those responsible for competitive courses and international universities guidance. He supports Mr Dunne in the A-level and BTEC options process. The role involves close monitoring of each pupil's performance, offering guidance on intervention where necessary, and managing the Sixth Form Tutors.

Head of Lower School – Sarah Collinson



Mrs Collinson has overall responsibility for the performance of individual children from Years 9 to 11 via their Tutors. She supports Mr Dunne in the GCSE options process, providing such counselling, intervention and, if necessary sanctions, that are required to secure the best outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 11.

Head of Development Year – Will Day Lewis



Mr Day Lewis is responsible for the overall management and organisation of the Development Year, a one-year programme aimed at supporting international pupils to develop the language and subject skills necessary to allow them to progress to the Sixth Form.

Assistant Head (Academic) – Peter Martin



Mr Martin supports Mr Dunne in matters relating to teaching methodologies, is the line manager of several academic departments, creates the timetable each year, runs the Learning Research Group and supports the management of professional standards.

Tutors

All full time teachers, except House Masters and House Mistresses, are Tutors. Tutors have an overarching responsibility for the academic progress of each pupil in their Tutor group. They monitor the progress of each pupil, then facilitate and provide as much support as can be reasonably expected.

To **provide support**, they:

- Are the primary initial link between home and school on academic matters
- Assist tutees to manage all of their commitments
- Attend school events to support their tutees
- Celebrate their tutees' successes

To **monitor progress**, they:

- Check academic progress across all subjects and identify any cross-subject issues
- Meet tutees (at least fortnightly) to discuss progress, celebrate successes, identify barriers to success, agree solutions, and review targets
- Hold weekly Tutor groups designed to support study skills development
- Check their tutees are participating in activities and extra-curricular opportunities

To **facilitate support**, they:

- Undertake duties in Houses
- Ensure Housemasters and Housemistresses understand any academic issues and discuss responses to these
- Co-ordinate responses to matters that cross subject and departmental lines
- Escalate issues to Heads of Lower School and Sixth Form where appropriate



Academic Structure

At Wycliffe Senior School, the youngest cohort is Year 9, comprising pupils who are usually aged 13-14 years. Years 10 and 11 follow, which are the GCSE years, and then Year 12 and 13 form the 'Sixth Form' of advanced study.

A one-year English language programme (Development Year) also runs for overseas pupils whose language skills need development before they undertake Sixth Form courses.

Settling into Year 9

We expect that through Year 9 pupils will begin to show greater maturity and take greater responsibility for their own learning. They develop skills of independent learning which will make them more effective in later life, better pupils in the short and medium term, and more successful in public exams. One means by which we help develop such skills is the Year 9 Project.

The Year 9 Project is explained on the Parents' Section of Firefly but, in short, it is an opportunity for all Year 9 pupils to get engaged in a year-long piece of independent study into a subject of their own choosing, and produce a final product of which they can be proud. It requires at least 40 hours of independent work, during which study skills and an appetite for learning should be developed. These are submitted after the May half term holiday in Year 9.

We also want our Year 9s to really give things a go. They should try out new activities from the extensive programme offered, as well as trying new learning techniques to support deep and profound learning.

Understanding the Curriculum

At Wycliffe we offer a programme of GCSEs in the Lower School (Years 9, 10 and 11) and in Sixth Form (Years 12 and 13) we follow A Levels and BTECs (applied vocational courses). Alongside these we have a range of other compulsory lessons in essential skills for life, which include Physical Education, Games, Personal Social Health and Economic Education (PSHEE), Digital Literacy, Chapels, Tutorials, and Careers.

Year 9

Year 9 is a bridge between pupils' prior learning and the GCSE syllabuses that culminate in public examinations in Year 11. In Year 9 we offer all subjects to all pupils and then ask them, with parental support and our guidance, to choose the ten subjects that they will follow to GCSE. An event is held on the Friday afternoon before January each year to help in this process. At this event, parents can speak to subject leaders of the GCSE options, and pupils already taking the subjects. Internal exams towards the end of Year 9 serve as a progress check, and to help prepare pupils for the style of assessment that awaits in GCSEs.

Years 10 and 11

Years 10 and 11 are the GCSE years in which pupils are able to make a limited number of subject choices for the first time in their education. There are five compulsory, or core subjects; English Literature, English Language, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology, plus five optional ones. GCSE courses last two years and lead to qualifications that are internationally recognised. In most subjects assessment is by way of examinations at the end of the two-year programme. More details can be found in the Wycliffe GCSE guide.

Sixth Form

In the Sixth Form pupils are able to focus their studies on 3 or 4 subjects, choosing from a wide range of A levels and BTEC National courses, and the Extended Project Qualification. We also offer GCSE resit classes in English and Mathematics, and English language classes for those with another first language.

Development Year (DY)

The Development Year (DY) introduces pupils to a range of different subjects allowing a degree of choice in non-examined Humanities and Creative Arts, alongside GCSE classes and 'English as an Additional Language' courses.

Public Exams

What are GCSEs, iGCSEs and A levels?

GCSEs are General Certificates of School Education and are designed to be accessible to all mainstream pupils in Key Stage 4 of the UK education system, that being for pupils usually aged between 14 and 16. They are assessed by examination, and, in a few subjects, performance in coursework and practical elements also contribute towards the final grades. Assessment normally happens at the end of a two-year programme that finishes in the Summer Term of Year 11. Results are released in late August. GCSEs are graded from 9–1 with 9 being the highest.



iGCSEs are very similar but in some subjects they have less coursework and can provide a better stepping stone to A Level study. The manner of assessment is devised for those taking GCSE qualifications overseas, and in some ways are particularly suitable for international pupils. They carry exactly the same value for pupils as GCSEs do, and are equally recognised by employers and Universities (although iGCSEs get the school no 'external recognition' for their achievement).

A (or Advanced) Levels are qualifications for pupils in Key Stage 5 (Years 12 and 13). They are designed to be challenging qualifications that prepare pupils for university study. They are assessed by exam and, sometimes, coursework, at the end of a two-year programme of study. Results are released in late August. A Levels are graded from A*-E with A* being the highest.

BTEC qualifications are the names given to vocational national qualifications. They can be worth the same as 1, 2 or 3 A Levels per BTEC, depending on which programme has been followed over one or two years. They are mainly coursework assessed but with a shorter exam taken to cover part of the course. They are recognised by universities and employers and can be taken in conjunction with A Levels in a mixed programme. Results are released in late August each year, with grades awarded being Distinction*, Distinction, Merit and Pass.

GCSE and A Level / BTEC Options

Support and guidance to help in choosing GCSE and A-Level subjects is given by way of school publications, through Tutorials and in face-to-face meetings with the children. It is important that the right reasons are considered when choosing subjects. Picking subjects on the basis of what friends are or are not doing, which teachers might or might not be teaching them, and what parents want their children to be studying, are rarely the right approaches.

For GCSEs, keeping a broad generalised approach is almost always the best policy. There are few careers and courses that are restricted by the wrong GCSE choice. The exception may be for certain careers in Medicine and Science for which Separate Sciences should be pursued. What is important for competitive courses at competitive universities is getting as many high grades at GCSE as possible, rather than simply collecting numbers of GCSEs.



For Sixth Form choices, pupils need to work backwards, starting from their preferred careers option, should they have one. This might indicate the best university course to aim for, or employment-based or training route, which in turn might suggest some preferred subjects for them to follow. Overall however, pupils need to select subjects which are going to secure the best possible grades through sustained study over two years.

Syllabus and assessment – How have things changed?

Depending on when and where you were at school, things are likely to have changed a great deal. There is more for the pupils to learn, and it needs to be learned in greater depth at iGCSE, GCSE, BTEC and A Level. Assessments are more demanding too, and pupils have to show knowledge, understanding, evaluation and analysis, and sometimes creativity too. Recent changes mean that current grades cannot be easily compared with what came before.

Setting and Banding

We gather assessment and transition information from the various schools that feed into Wycliffe, but these are not always standardised consistently. At the start of each of Year 9, Year 10 and Year 12, we assess pupils using nationally standardised systems called CAT4 and CEM, as well as undertaking continuous assessment in each subject. Pupils in Years 9 – 11 at Wycliffe are set according to ability in English and Mathematics. Non-core and GCSE option subjects are not set by ability. English and Mathematics are set independently of each other, and there is considerable overlap between sets.

Wycliffe is larger than the schools from which most Year 9 pupils have come. Having been in top set in Year 8 in a smaller school does not equate necessarily to securing a place in the top set here. The most important factor is to ensure that pupils are in the right set in which they can make most progress leading to the best possible GCSE grades. The experience and expertise of staff in each subject will lead them to review each pupil's performance across the weeks and if necessary, we will re-set. Being top of set 3, for example, would not necessarily mean that the pupil should automatically move to a higher set. They may perform at that level because it is the right place for them.

If you have any concerns, please raise them with the head of the relevant department but be reassured that setting is done solely with the intention that each pupil will progress at the best possible rate, and is done with reference to other pupils in the Year group too, about whom parents do not have all the information.

Understanding Reports and Assessment

There are six formal assessment points during the year (at October half-term; end-of-term just before Christmas; February half-term; end of Easter term (usually late March); end of May; end of the year (early July), at which pupils' progress is reported to parents. The format of the report will vary slightly according to the year group and stage of their studies, the timing of internal exams, and the proximity of parents' evenings. A table of the year's cycle of assessment and feedback is provided to parents at the start of each year.

They typically include grades linked to projected likely final outcomes in examined classes, target grades in such classes, Learning Engagement grades, plus more detailed comments two or three times per year. Report criteria are provided to parents each year in the Autumn Term to coincide with reports at Assessment Point 1. The Tutors and House Master/Mistress also write a comment each term and the Headmaster writes two per child each year. Subject teachers write longer comments twice a year which include a review of performance and progress, and advice for how improvement can be made or sustained.



Please talk to your child about the content of the report, consider the targets set and advice given, and reinforce the messages sent. If you have any queries about them, these should be made in the first instance to your child's Tutor.

Support, Interventions and 'Causes for Concern'

If something has gone wrong or you think it might have, please get in touch as soon as you can. The Tutor is usually the best place to start. Education is a people-to-people venture involving a partnership between parents, pupils and staff. Sometimes people make mistakes, don't exercise the best judgement, misread or misunderstand a situation, or perhaps simply 'fall out'. We will seek to ensure that problems are addressed quickly, and usually, when the communication of a matter has been addressed, the issue resolves itself. Where we believe a pupil is not performing at their expected level for whatever reason, teachers may raise a 'Cause for Concern'. This triggers a number of internal communications to ensure that all the people who need to know about any concern have been informed, and so that responses can be coordinated across pastoral and academic lines.

An action plan may be drawn up as a consequence, either by a subject teacher or by a Tutor if the matter crosses more than one subject. Parents may be involved at some stage depending on the seriousness of the issue, and should be reassured that this is neither a punishment nor sanction but a system designed to ensure that the right interventions are in place to support each child to their best possible outcomes. Where action plans are required, these are monitored and reviewed by the Head of Sixth Form, Head of Development Year, or Head of Lower School as appropriate.

Supporting your child's study (as a Boarder and as a Day pupil)

It would be very helpful, for periods when pupils are working at home, for them to have access to a calm and relaxed environment, conducive to study. We recommend that pupils do not attempt to listen to music, engage in social media, or attempt to watch screens at the same time as working and revising. The exceptions are obviously educational apps and research.

We encourage parents to enquire about their schoolwork, asking them to explain what it is they have learned, and show interest in their education in each subject. Pupils will get some holiday work, inevitably, but holidays are also a time to rest, even when main public exams are approaching in Year 11 or Year 13. Holiday prep echoes the same amount that is given in any 'normal' week. The table below shows the expected total amount of prep expected in each subject studied in the school in Years 9-11. In Sixth Form the pupils are expected to undertake as much work outside the classroom as they do inside it, in addition to pre-reading and other background reading around a relevant topic.

Subject	Time per week in minutes	
	Year 9	Years 10 & 11
English	60	60
Mathematics	3 x 20	60
Sciences	3 x 25	3 x 30
Art	30	
Computer Science	30	
Drama	15	
Geography	30	
History	30	
Languages	2 x 30	
Music	30	
RS	20	
Life Skills	15	20
Each GCSE option (x5)		60
TOTAL	7 hours 30 minutes	8 hours 50 minutes

As public exams in Years 11 and 13 draw near, and in the approach to coursework deadlines in creative subjects, this might increase significantly however. A timetable for revision should be prepared by each pupil in readiness for exams, which includes 'down' time, occasions and events that would otherwise distract, and a good deal of rest during the holiday period. By timetabling the learning that is necessary around such events, pupils will not resent the work they are doing, and, within reason, will not have to miss social and other opportunities.

Exam season

In each year group there are one or two periods of internal exams each academic year. The dates of these exams are distributed at the beginning of the summer holiday at the end of the previous academic year, in the Key Dates document circulated to parents and made available on the parent portal. Such exams are primarily diagnostic progress tests and provide staff, pupils and parents with an indication of how well the children did in an exam setting based on topics studied that year up to the point of the exams.

Some series of exams prove particularly challenging every single year, most notably the Year 12 internal exams and the first of the Year 11 mock exam weeks. Parents need to be reassured of the purpose of these exams and the real point is to ensure that pupils are fully prepared when they take the real thing at the end of Years 11 and 13.

Pupils who qualify for special consideration as a consequence of a particular learning need, disability, or other exceptional circumstance have these arrangements managed by the Examinations Officer, Mr Richard Feather and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator, Mrs Elizabeth Dytham. The circumstances under which special access arrangements and special consideration will be allowed are very tightly controlled by the examination boards. Please contact your child's Tutor if you think that they should have special consideration or access arrangements if it is not happening.

Revising for exams

Pupils are provided with examination guidance and advice from both teachers and tutors, and information is available to parents on the Firefly Parents' Pages. Revising amounts to far more than reading, and pupils should be actively engaged employing a range of techniques such as dual channelling, retrieval practice, and any other technique that requires them to actively synthesise the information that they are trying to learn, so that when presented with new opportunities they can demonstrate their knowledge in an exam and draw upon their learning with confidence.

It is natural that pupils will feel some anxiety as exams approach. The best means by which this can be overcome is for them to know the material on which they will be tested, to seek advice when trying to learn content that they do not understand, and to develop skills of resilience.

We encourage the pupils to see exams as an opportunity to show off what they know, to prove people wrong about them where perhaps they have dismissed their abilities in the past, and as an opportunity to confirm for themselves their true capabilities.

Parents can be particularly helpful by providing emotional support, practical support through testing, questioning and organisation, taking an active interest in what the children are learning, and by providing an appropriate learning space and the time necessary to undertake the learning required.

Revision is of course most successful when done constantly through a course and not left until the last few weeks.

Next steps; life beyond Wycliffe

Careers support

Each year group receives Careers and Guidance education via a programme devised by our in-house Careers Manager, Mrs Caroline Hiorns, delivered within our Life Skills syllabus. Having our own qualified Careers staff to do this means we can adjust plans and target advice more flexibly, and make use of a network of employers, former pupils, and university contacts accordingly as each child's aspirations develop. Year 9 sees an introductory module that ensures pupils are starting to think about where their futures may lie, so that they make the right choices for GCSEs.

In Year 11 there is specific CV writing, and job application advice provided, and we work with Gloucestershire Business Partnership so that each pupil has the opportunity to undergo a mock interview for employment.

In Year 12 our Aspire programme brings in employers from a range of sectors and pupils present to them on their preferred career paths, after which they get feedback. The Year 13 programme focuses on next steps, whether towards work, university or apprenticeships, with most following a route to university.

Our experts in school help with specific support, tailored to pupils' chosen goals. Our Competitive Courses Coordinator, Dr Keith Rose, helps prepare pupils for highly competitive courses and universities, the Head of Sixth Form is our UCAS expert, and we have an in-house International Universities application expert, Mrs Bobbie Miller, who also takes the role of US university counsellor.

Wycliffe is a centre for US SAT university entrance exams, and we have a preparation programme to support children if they are interested in studying abroad.

Every year we invite a wide range of top universities, from the UK and overseas, and major employers, to exhibit at our own Futures Fair. Pupils have the opportunity to visit the stands to support their choices and broaden their horizons. Parents are invited to attend late afternoon sessions. Details are circulated in advance when each year's plans are finalised.

A regular Careers newsletter is produced for parents which keeps you up to date with what each Year group is doing that term.



Contacts and Communication

For **pastoral matters**, please contact your child's House Master/House Mistress on the number and email address that will be provided at the start of the year.


For **academic matters**, their Tutor will usually be the most favourable first point of contact by email. They will send an email at the start of Autumn Term to introduce themselves.


Alternatively, please do get in touch with the **Senior School's Reception** on 01453 822432, or email senior@wycliffe.co.uk and your enquiry will be directed to the most appropriate person for action.


Parents will have access to the **Parent Portal** and the Parents' section of Senior Academic Portal (called **Firefly**). Log in information and instructions for all IT systems will be provided at the start of Autumn Term. Firefly allows you to view certain documents and academic information online, as well as your children's prep and timetable.


The Parent Portal is an online communication system used to share information and to provide access to information communicated to parents by email or SMS, and to various other documents including exams information and school reports for your children.

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Bold & Loyal
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