

WELCOME TO BUCKINGHAM HOUSE

NEW STUDENT
HANDBOOK
2024



WELCOME TO BUCKINGHAM HOUSE:

Buckingham House is one of five boys' Houses at Gordon's School. Three of the Houses, Buckingham, Gravesend and Khartoum, are for day boarding students only, whilst Balmoral and Sandringham are home to residential boys. There are also five girls' Houses at Gordon's, Augusta, China, Kensington, Victoria and Windsor. Woolwich House is the newest House, for Year 7 boys and girls boarders.

Buckingham has around 120 students, ranging from ages 11-18, in years 7-13. The boys are supervised by a team of staff led by Head of House, Mr Sinclair, two Assistant Heads of House, Mrs Westgate and Mrs Bailey, and a number of House tutors. We enjoy a great supportive relationship with the parents and guardians of our current boys, with parents able to contact the House staff during the working day to discuss any worries or concerns, which enables the team to offer the best support it can during the development of the students.

The House sets high standards of behaviour and as such there is an atmosphere of friendliness and respect in Buckingham. Students in years 7-10 enjoy use of a games console, playing pool, table tennis or table football together in the junior common room on the ground floor, whilst the older boys enjoy similar amenities in the senior common room, or make the most of our piano for practise and mini recitals on the ground floor. There is also a strong sense of identity and the Buckingham boys are fiercely competitive in the many Inter-House competitions, which cover a range of activities including sports, the arts and academic pursuits. All students are encouraged to represent their House in at least one competition each year, with older students often leading the teams.

We run a tuck shop which normally opens twice a week and all profits are donated to the House's chosen charity of the year. Students are also encouraged to participate in other charitable endeavours, not just within Buckingham, but also within the wider school, which helps to foster a sense of benevolence and community.

Character education is a strong feature of Gordon's life, where students are expected to understand and reflect upon the five character traits of Courtesy, Integrity, Diligence, Enthusiasm and Resilience. This character development, alongside the firm pastoral and academic support from House staff and teachers, helps to develop our students to be well-rounded and resilient individuals who are better placed to deal with the various challenges throughout their Gordon's career in a safe environment where each individual is valued.

We very much look forward to welcoming all our new boys in September. During those early and often daunting days as new students make the transition to a bigger school, the House team will be on hand to help, guide and support them in any way that they can.

THIS HANDBOOK:

This handbook has been written to aid your transition from primary school, to secondary school, and gives an insight in to life at Gordon's and some of its rules and regulations, which will help new students to settle in as quickly as possible.

This handbook is not exhaustive and any questions parents may have before the start of term in September can be directed at any of the House staff, whose details will feature at the back of this pamphlet.



AEROSOLS:

Aerosols are strictly banned. Aerosols set off the school's fire alarms and any student caught using aerosols will have it confiscated and may face a sanction.

ARRIVING AND DEPARTING AT GORDON'S:

Buckingham House opens at 7:45am. Students go to Form or Chapel for Registration at 8:15am, and lessons begin at 8:40am. Students arriving late must report directly to the School Office.

BOOTS:

Football and rugby boots must be stored in students' allocated lockers and must be named. Students must not walk across the bridge to the sports pitches wearing studded boots.

BREAK:

Students have a morning break after Period 2 at 10:30am and an afternoon break after Period 6 at 3:35pm. Snacks and fruit are offered during afternoon break.

BUDDIES:

All new Year 7s will be allocated a Year 8 Buckingham 'buddy'. Students' buddies are on-hand during the early weeks and months to answer any questions that new students may have, and also to help guide new students around the school site until they are familiar with where they are going.

BULLETIN:

Buckingham House bulletin with lots of relevant information is sent to parents weekly.

BULLYING:

The school has a very active and robust anti-bullying policy. All incidents of bullying should be reported to a member of the House staff, a teacher or a peer mentor.

CHARITY:

The House's chosen charity changes each year. We will have a House discussion and vote on the charity for that year. All profits from the sale of tuck help support this charity and other worthy causes.

COMPETITIONS:

There are many Inter-House competitions throughout the year, where Houses compete against each other in various activities and disciplines. Competitions cover the Arts, Sports and Academic and all Buckingham boys are expected to contribute to at least one competition each year. Older boys often lead the House teams.

FACILITIES:

There are two common rooms in Buckingham House. Years 7-10 have access to pool and table tennis, computer games and TV in the ground floor common room, whilst Years 11-13 have TV and computer games in the senior common room on the first floor.

Year 12-13 students are allocated study rooms for private study during the school day. These are shared and provide a quiet space for the senior boys.

FIRE DRILL & LOCK DOWN DRILL:

If the fire alarm sounds, all students are to form up with their House on the front field. In the event of a lock down drill, teachers or House staff will direct students to remain inside buildings until such time as they are given the all-clear. At this point, all students will be accounted for in a roll-call on the front field as per a standard fire drill.

GOING OFF-SITE:

Students in Years 7-11 are not allowed off the school site (except with prior permission to attend medical appointments etc). Years 12-13 are permitted to visit local shops during break and lunchtime, and are required to sign out with the House and sign in on their return.

HOUSE COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

These are held termly and are chaired by the student Head of House. These feed into the school's Boarders' Council and are a useful forum for sharing wider House views on important topics.

HOUSE FAMILIES:

Students will join 'House Families' which comprise small groups of students from different year groups across the House, to encourage friendship and camaraderie. Families receive points for participating in activities and rewards are offered to winning families.



HOUSE MEETINGS:

House meetings are held weekly at 8:20am in year groups on different days.

ILLNESS:

Students who feel ill during the day must report to the school office where staff will assess the student's condition. If a student needs to be assessed in the medical centre, a nurse will decide if they are fit for school and call parents if they need to be picked up.

INSTAGRAM:

Buckingham House has an instagram account (**[buckingham.house.gordons](https://www.instagram.com/buckingham.house.gordons)**) which is periodically updated with photos and snippets of recent House events.

INTRA-HOUSE:

In the winter months, when students are not outside so much, the House runs Intra-House events in pool, table-tennis, Fifa and Switch games.

LOCKERS & CAGES:

Every student will be allocated a cage and a padlock is provided. There is an additional supply of padlocks available for purchase in the House for £2. We do not recommend the use of combination locks. The House is not responsible for items lost from unlocked cages.

LOST PROPERTY:

All items brought in to school **must be labelled**. Uniform, including ceremonial Blues, must be clearly named and placed into students' cages immediately upon arrival at school. Buckingham House cannot be responsible for any lost property in the House.

MANNERS & COURTESY:

Students are always expected to be courteous and use good manners, not only around the House, but also the wider school. Students who consistently display good manners and behaviour can expect to be rewarded with commendations. Those who display poor manners or behaviour may receive bad comments or sanctions.

MEALS:

The school has an outstanding catering department and a varied 3-week rolling lunch and supper menu is served daily. Special dietary requirements are catered for and parents can notify the House of any dietary needs at any point. All students are expected to eat at school. Snacks are provided at afternoon break.

MEDICINE:

Only controlled medicines can be administered in House. Any prescription medicines or over the counter drugs can only be given by the medical staff in the med-centre. Students with asthma or allergies must be in possession of their inhaler or epi pen at all times. Another epi pen will be kept in the staff room for emergencies and for peace of mind the House can keep an additional epi pen too.

MONEY:

Small amounts of money may be brought in to school for the tuck shop. Bringing large amounts of money in to school is discouraged and the House cannot be held responsible for any money that is lost.

NAMING:

All property brought in to school must be named. This includes all footwear and personal (non-uniform) clothing and belongings.

NOTICEBOARDS:

The House noticeboards are updated regularly. Students should read the noticeboards frequently to keep current with school events.

PERIOD 7:

All students in main school will select their preferred P7 choices before the start of each term. Permission to miss or change P7 activities must be made to Miss J Warner.

PICK-UP:

Buckingham boys can be collected by vehicle from the car park opposite the main school entrance, or at the Library end of the school site at the end of the day. Collection from the Dining Hall end is reserved for Augusta, Balmoral, China and Kensington Houses only.

PREFECTS:

The House appoints a number of Prefects each year from Years 10 and 12 to fill positions of responsibility. All students are strongly encouraged to develop their leadership and put themselves forward for Prefect roles during their senior years.





PREP:

A link will be sent to allow parents to confirm on which days and times their son will stay for prep. Years 7-11 students may stay from 6.15pm to 7.30pm, Monday-Thursday. On Fridays, there is an optional prep/quiet time in the library 6pm to 7pm for all years. Students may leave at 7pm with parents' permission. Prep is to be conducted in silence. Students are expected to work independently with no exceptions. The supervising staff member may be able to offer academic assistance in some circumstances but all students have access to a laptop to help or research should they need to do so.

PROBLEMS OR WORRIES:

As well as links on Firefly, there are a variety of staff and students available to seek advice or guidance from throughout the school. First and foremost, students should speak to a member of their House staff if they are concerned or worried about a problem they are facing, or if they have worries or concerns about a friend or peer. There are also many helpline numbers displayed around the House and school site should a student wish to speak anonymously. The medical centre and Chapel are also places of refuge should a student need or wish to speak to someone in difficult times.

SANCTIONS:

Sanctions can only be issued by members of the House staff, teachers or senior leadership. Sanctions can be attending detentions or House gating during break times, and for more serious issues, may result in internal or external exclusion.

REPAIRS:

Faults to House fixtures and fittings must be reported to a member of the House staff. All students must treat the House with respect. Any wilful damage or abuse will result in a sanction.

REWARDS:

Rewards may be issued in-House by members of the House team and include postcards home, or pizza or donuts will be ordered into the House for success at Inter-House or sweet treats for diary of the week. Wider school rewards may be awarded by members of the wider school leadership team, including letters of congratulations from the Head Teacher, and honours awards, colours to be worn on school blazers or special school ties.

SOCIAL EVENTS:

Buckingham House enjoys several social events throughout the year including trips to Gravity Force, go-karting and Thorpe Lake.

STAFF:

The House has a supportive and experienced team, led by Mr J Sinclair. He is assisted by Assistant Heads of House, Mrs G Westgate on Mondays and Tuesdays, and Mrs S Bailey on Wednesday to Friday. There are also a number of House tutors who are present in the House during break and lunchtimes and to supervise prep in the evening.

UNIFORM:

High standards of dress are expected in the House at all times. Correct uniform is to be worn, with shirts tucked in at all times and ties reaching the waistband of the trousers. Sixth Formers are to wear business attire for all lessons, or Gordon's branded sports clothing during extra-curricular activities. All students in Years 7-11 will be issued with a ceremonial 'Blues' uniform. Students are expected to look after this uniform and are responsible for cleaning and any minor repairs. A Blues swap shop takes place periodically before all major parades for the boys to exchange their Blues as they grow.

VALUABLES:

Valuables should not be brought in to school. When it is necessary to do so, they must be labelled and can be safely secured in the House office.

VIDEO GAMES:

There are several games consoles with a wide range of games available in the House and are used at the discretion of the House staff.

STUDENT HEAD OF HOUSE:

This position is held by a Sixth Form student who has displayed leadership, loyalty and team work. He will be on hand to support and offer guidance to younger students. He will also be expected to attend House social functions.

STUDENT HOUSE CAPTAIN:

This position is held by a senior boy in the House, who takes centre stage during all parades and ceremonial commitments. He will be selected on his marching ability and will lead the House during Friday marching practice.

STUDENTS QUOTES:

"The teachers are very friendly and problems are solved very quickly."

"Buckingham is a kind house with friendly students."

"The tuck shop is the best."

"There are lots of activities in the House including pool, table tennis and PS4."

"There is a good vibe in the House and always someone to talk to."

"I was the only new Year 12 student in Buckingham this year the boys welcomed me in and settling in wasn't a problem. I couldn't ask for a better house master than Mr Sinclair."

PARENT QUOTES:

"We cannot fault the experience our son has had both in the warm welcome into Buckingham House and the wonderful way that Mr Sinclair and his team have quickly got to know him and helped him settle in at Gordon's. From day one his interests were on the radar and he was encouraged to participate fully in various fun Inter-House events ; thereby becoming part of the team , getting to know the other boys quickly and feeling at home in a new environment. The response to any emails from us has been immediate and comprehensive, always with the offer to pop in and chat. We have felt completely at ease about both the education and wellbeing and this is in no small part due to the way in which Mr Sinclair and his team have created a 'home from home' feel in a school that has brought out the best in our son."







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