

Guide for Parents

2019-20



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Welcome to Worcester Sixth Form College

We are delighted to welcome your son/daughter to Worcester Sixth Form College and hope that they enjoy their time with us. Please encourage them to take advantage of all of the great opportunities available to them such as enrichment and extension activities to complement their academic studies.

This short guide is designed to answer some of the frequently asked questions by parents of students who join the College. Please keep it for future reference.

The College Year 2019-20

Autumn Term begins	Tuesday 27th August 2019
Half Term	Monday 28th October - Friday 1st November 2019
Autumn Term ends	Friday 20th December 2019
Spring Term begins	Monday 6th January 2020
Half Term	Monday 17th - Friday 21st February 2020
Spring Term ends	Friday 3rd April 2020
Summer Term begins	Monday 20th April 2020
Half Term	Monday 25th - Friday 29th May 2020
Summer Term ends	Tuesday 14th July 2020

May Day holiday is Friday 8th May 2020.

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Introduction

The College welcomes the involvement of all parents and we hope that we will have a successful partnership with you, working together to encourage your son or daughter to achieve their full potential.

We ask that parents take some time to read this handbook so that you are aware of our expectations in terms of behaviour and approach to study, as well as what our students can expect from the College.

The College expects that students will take responsibility for their own learning and progress, however, parents play an important role in this process and the College will liaise with parents accordingly.

You can expect the College to provide:

- A personal link via your son/daughter's dedicated tutor;
- An opportunity to meet with the Principal, Deputy Principal and Pastoral Tutor at the Evening for Parents' of New Students in late September and at Parents' Evenings;
- Parents' Evenings to discuss your son/daughter's progress with subject teachers and his/her tutor;
- A prompt response to any query or concern;
- Contact from the College should we become concerned about your son/daughter's attendance or progress;
- An appointment with your son/daughter's tutor if either you or we need to discuss an aspect of your son/daughter's progress;
- Representation on the College's Local Governing Body through the Parent Governors.

We ask that parents:

- Encourage your son/daughter to meet the obligations outlined in this handbook;
- Inform us if you become concerned about any aspect of your son/daughter's progress;
- Discuss Summary Assessments with your son/daughter;
- Inform us of any changes to personal circumstance e.g. change of address, domestic situation;
- Report absence to the College via the Tutorial Hub or electronically;
- Avoid taking holidays in term time or request permission from a Head of Year where such arrangements are absolutely unavoidable;
- Support your son/daughter with work outside of lessons – this should equal the time spent in lessons.

How Will The College Communicate With Parents/Guardians?

Tutors

All students have a dedicated Pastoral Tutor. Tutors are an important first point of contact with parents and if you have concerns about your son/daughter's academic progress or general welfare then please contact their tutor. Your son/daughter will be able to tell you who their tutor is, however you can find this information for yourself by viewing your son/daughter's timetable on the College Portal. Alternatively, if you phone the Tutorial Hub they will be able to give you this information.

The tutor plays a key role in the organisation of the College. Tutors meet with students in tutor groups for registration at a weekly tutorial session but may also arrange to meet with students on other occasions.

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Heads of Year

There are three Senior Leaders who have pastoral responsibility and are Heads of Year, Graham Williams, Julie Ferman and Carl Rusby, each being responsible for the tutors. Your son/daughter will know who their Head of Year is from their timetable, alternatively you can see this for yourself on the College Portal.

Tutors may refer questions or issues to Heads of Year regarding their tutees if they remain unresolved, or are of a serious nature.

Principal and Deputy Principal

The Principal and/or Deputy Principal will write to parents throughout the academic year and notifications about forthcoming events will also be shared on the College's website and social media platforms.

Reporting on Student Progress

If students are on an Applied programme they will receive regular feedback about their progress following the submission of each assignment.

If they are studying an A Level or Foundation Year GCSE programme they will also receive regular feedback on their work. All of our teachers want students to succeed and they are always willing to discuss ways in which they can improve the standard of your work.

In addition to the above students will be more receive formal feedback via Summary Assessments on three occasions in the first year. Each of these Summary Assessments will be based on a mock examination, test or significant assignment. Teachers will suggest and record targets for improvement and it will be made clear to whether students are on track to meet their target grade. This information will also be made available for parents/guardians to see on the College Portal.

Parents' Evenings

Parents' Evenings are provided for consultation between parents, staff and students so we strongly recommend that parents attend these evenings together with their son/daughter. The timetable of appointments is made by students with subject teachers and tutors. You will receive a letter of invitation prior to each event.

Parents' Evenings are planned for the following dates:

Tuesday, 26th November 4.30 – 7.30pm (A-K)

Thursday, 5th December 4.30 – 7.30pm (L-Z)

Thursday, 12th March 4.30 – 7.30pm (second year and Foundation Year students only)

Please note that you may attend either of the paired evenings – the suggested alphabetical division by surname is for guidance only.

What Are The College's Expectations About Attendance?

We expect students to be present at all lessons unless absence is absolutely unavoidable and would encourage scheduling of personal appointments and activities outside of College time e.g. dental check-ups. The link between achievement and examination success is self-evident but is also confirmed by empirical evidence. A survey of sixth form colleges concluded that students who attend 95% of lessons or more typically will achieve three grades higher across their programme, when compared to similarly qualified students who attend less than 85% of the time. Regrettably, a small number of families underestimate the impact of student absence on

academic performance. We recognise that families sometimes face difficult issues and in such circumstances we would encourage you to talk to your son/daughter's tutor as we may be able to help and minimise the potential damage that absence can cause.

Students must continue to attend all the subjects on their timetable until the end of the academic year. Failure to attend any subject may jeopardise a student's progression to the second year of that subject and could result in them not being able to progress to the second year if a suitable programme of study cannot be agreed.

Some students progressing to the second year of their courses will need to be available to discuss their proposed programme of study in the week commencing Monday, 24th August 2020.

Reporting absence through illness

All absences need to be reported via the College Portal. Parents can access the Parent Portal via the email verification sent to you. Full instructions are given on the College Portal. Reporting absence in this way means that staff are informed and registers are updated. By using the College Portal you will also be able to view live data regarding academic performance, attendance and public examinations. We ask that parents verify absence on the College Portal every day their son/daughter is absent.

If students are ill at College they are asked to report to the Tutorial Hub. If they are too unwell to travel home alone parents will be requested to pick students up from College. It is, therefore, imperative that 'emergency contact' information is kept up-to-date. Parents should notify any such absence through the College Portal.

If your son/daughter has been absent from College and we have not been informed of this you may be contacted by the College, either by phone or email, enquiring after their welfare, any expected date of return and, if appropriate, the offer of support in terms of home study advice.

What should I do if I wish to take my son/daughter on holiday in term time?

As a general principle we would ask that parents/carers do not take holidays with their sons and daughters during term-time; any absence from College can have a detrimental effect on students' studies and at certain critical times of the year can be catastrophic. The College calendar for term-time and holidays for 2019-20 is distributed to all students and is on the inside cover of this Guide. It is also available on the College website.

We recognise that parents' work commitments sometimes mean that such disruption is inevitable. If you do want to take your son/daughter out of College for a family holiday please ask them to obtain an Advanced Planned Absence Form from the Tutorial Hub. The form, once completed, will make clear any work that may be missed and which will need to be finished within agreed deadlines. An indication of the likely impact on their learning/development will also be made. It is important to understand that authorisation will not have been obtained until the form has been signed by the student's tutor.

Under no circumstances should students be allowed to arrange holidays on their own, with friends or family members other than parents or carers. Students who do this will be subject to disciplinary procedures.

Absence for other reasons

Absence for other reasons will of course be treated sympathetically by the College, particularly with regard to bereavement, work experience or higher education visits. We ask that you keep the College informed in these circumstances.

What Does My Son/Daughter Do At College?

Student Timetables

Classes are held each day between 8.50am and 4.10pm except on Thursday afternoons when lessons finish at 3.25pm. You can see your son/daughter's timetable on the College Portal. Knowledge of the times of your son/daughter's lessons, tutorial and other commitments is essential to enable parents to support students in their studies.

Course Choices

First year students are normally expected to choose 3 Advanced Level subjects or equivalent and to consider the enrichment opportunities on offer. Tutorials and either Core Support or Core Maths will be added to the timetable. There is an expectation that students use the remaining time in the College day to prepare and consolidate their learning. Students following Performing Arts or Physical Education courses or who are a member of a Sports Academy, the Mathematics Academy, Science and Engineering Academy or are following a Professional Programme will have an additional timetable commitment.

Please note that students will not be permitted to drop below the minimum timetable commitment unless there are very strong reasons for doing so, e.g. health issues that are supported by medical evidence. As a result, failure to attend the full programme of study from the beginning to the end of the academic year may lead to the removal of your son/daughter's entire programme of study.

All students are expected to follow the programme of study explained above, to attend their lessons punctually and to complete homework assignments as required. This is seen as part of a contract between the College and its students as set out in the Learner Agreement that they will have signed at Course Confirmation.

How Much Time Do Students Need To Commit To College?

Many students significantly underestimate the amount of time they need to spend studying. There is, for example, a significant gap in terms of difficulty and complexity between GCSEs and A Levels or Level 3 Applied courses. As a general rule students should aim to spend between 35 and 37 hours week (including lessons and tutorials) studying. In other words College is a full-time job. Homework will normally be set in every lesson although the nature of time needed to complete this work vary. Homework will often require students to complete tasks that will not be formally assessed by staff. In recent times teachers have placed greater emphasis on 'flipped learning'. This typically means that students should complete a task or research activity prior to the lesson. This enables teachers to explore topics in lessons in greater depth. Students who chose not to complete this work will not be able to contribute to lessons and maximise their learning. If work has not been set students will be expected to make sure their notes are well organised, detailed and without gaps. Students need to take responsibility for their own learning and ensure that part-time jobs and similar voluntary commitments do not prevent them from being successful. (See the section below on Student Mindset.)

We do, of course, recognise that some students including young carers, have significant and serious additional commitments. If students inform us about these we will do our best to help them balance these competing claims on their time.

Student Mindset

The College devotes a considerable amount of resources into ensuring that all students are placed on appropriate courses. Students studying A Levels should be thinking in terms of four to five hours work per subject in addition to lesson times. Students on Applied courses should be putting in a similar amount of time per block. The College can be seen as a stepping stone between school and university or employment and as such they will have times

when they are not required in a lesson or tutor group. Students should use this time wisely for study if they are to be successful. Parents can help by encouraging their son/daughter to get into a routine of studying when not in lessons and limiting the time they spend socialising in College.

Students need to be well organised. Work notes, essays, tests papers etc - should be kept in a ring binder. These need to be well organised and presented in order to work effectively.

Students need to adopt an attitude of continuous improvement and be encouraged to look back over completed work. As exams approach, students need to attempt practice papers (these are readily available online). Some of this work will be done under teacher supervision in lessons but students have a responsibility to go beyond this.

Flying Start

In the first few weeks of the new academic year in September staff will be doing their best to ensure that students get into good study habits early on. To this end they will be keeping a careful eye on attendance, punctuality and work to make sure students are getting up to speed quickly.

Resources In The Learning Resources Centre

The Learning Resources Centre, which has more than 100 computers available for student use and a group study room, is an excellent place for them to work. The centre is open from 8.30am to 4.30pm each day and until 7pm on Wednesdays. Holiday opening hours will be confirmed on the College Portal.

In addition facilities are also available with Wi-Fi for quiet study or internet research/project work.

Examinations

The College will automatically enter and pay for students examinations in all of their subjects providing they fulfil certain obligations such as attending lessons, completing work and submitting coursework on time. If students do not fulfil these conditions then they may be expected to pay their own fee if they wish to take the examination at College. If any examination is a retake of one taken previously, students will also be asked to pay the fee unless the whole class is preparing for entry to that examination at the same time. They will be notified in advance of all exam deadlines and fees.

Students who miss examinations will be expected to pay for a second entry and departments are unlikely to be able to offer the same level of support in terms of revision etc. If students have any problems or questions concerning their examinations, they should visit the Exams Office.

What If My Son/Daughter Feels They Have Made The Wrong Course Choice?

Much time and effort is committed to ensuring that we offer students the courses that best match their needs. At Course Confirmation students will have been advised about and agreed to a programme of study to suit their existing qualifications, academic potential and career aspirations. Students must, therefore, keep to this timetable unless they have been given permission to change it.

The College strongly encourages students, who have the academic potential to do so, to enrol and maintain, in the first year at least, a programme of study including **3 A Level subjects**. This policy means that the College incurs additional teaching and examination costs and students will not be permitted to 'drop' a subject unless there are clear supporting medical needs or other exceptional circumstances.

Students who are considering changing subjects must do so responsibly. The first stage should be for the student to discuss the reason for change with their subject teacher. If the difficulty remains, they should

discuss the matter with their tutor who may refer them to their Head of Year who, in turn, will consider whether such a change is in the best interests of the student.

Changes to student timetables after the first two weeks of teaching are possible but should be thought through carefully as they may require considerable catching up on missed work. Changes beyond the first four weeks of teaching are rare and require permission from everyone affected. Changes beyond the first six weeks will not be agreed.

Students who do not attend a subject without permission may put their place at College at risk.

What If My Son/Daughter Decides WSFC Is Not For Them?

Students who are considering leaving College should discuss their concerns with their tutor as soon as possible. The tutor may be able to offer some helpful advice, including recommending a meeting with a careers specialist, which would enable the student to remain at College, or alternatively assist them with a different career path. However, if the decision is final the student will be referred to their Head of Year to complete the formal leaving procedures. A student would normally need to be present for the leaving procedures.

What Additional Financial Commitment Is Required?

We ask all students who join the College to pay £60. This is divided between the following:

a. Caution Money

All students who enrol at the College will be asked to pay a £37 book and property caution deposit. Students who qualify through hardship may be able to claim exemption.

On the completion of their course or whenever a student decides to leave College, they will be able to secure the return of their deposit minus a £7 contribution towards £10 worth of printing credit, by Bank Transfer, providing they have returned all College property, attended all their examinations or, where applicable, completed the College's formal Leaving Procedures

b. College Fund

All students are asked to contribute a once only payment of £23 to College Fund. The contributions are voluntary, however students usually pay within a week of the beginning of the autumn term. All the money received is spent directly or indirectly for the benefit of students including a contribution for free internet access via College computer and via the College Wi-Fi.

Students or parents who experience difficulty paying College Fund should speak to their tutor immediately.

Online Payments

Parents should make all payments to WSFC, (e.g. Caution Money, College Fund and all other payments for activities and events) online using ParentPay. You will have received a letter containing your activation details to enable you to set up an account. Further information can be found on the ParentPay website, alternatively please contact: finance@wsfc.ac.uk

What Financial Support Is Available?

Depending upon household income, personal circumstances, and travel arrangements, students at Worcester Sixth Form College can apply to the College's Financial Support Scheme for one or more of the following:

- An Education Bursary of £1,200 a year for students in care, care leavers, students who receive Income Support in their own right or those in receipt of Employment Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payments (PIP).
- A Travel Allowance in the form of a Severn card (or financial equivalent) where the student's household income is below £33,500 a year.
- Additional Support awards from the Additional Student Support Fund are based on the principle that the families of eligible students have a household income of £16,190 or less and are likely to be in receipt of either Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit or Income Support/Universal Credit.

Financial assistance is subject to minimum attendance levels. Please refer to the College website for the most up to date information or speak to the Student Finance Officer (based in Student Services). An application form for the 2019-20 academic year is available from the College website

All financial assistance is subject to meeting the attendance requirements set.

What If My Son/Daughter Experiences Academic Or Other Difficulties Whilst At College – What Support Is Available?

Learning Support

The College aims to provide special support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities and enjoys the support of excellent local services (hearing, visual, psychological). Contacts with professionals from these services can be made through Sara Payne, Learning Support Manager: sara.payne@wsfc.ac.uk

A learning support programme is now available throughout the week to offer help if students require particular assistance with basic skills in reading, writing, spelling or numeracy.

Advice, guidance and counselling

Students are able to benefit from the advice they receive from a variety of different sources. Tutors and subject staff are well placed to be able to offer advice on a wide range of academic issues.

Specialist advice is also available from Student Services where students may benefit from a range of support services including careers advice and guidance, counselling and health advice including sexual health.

Student Services also offers support with acquiring relevant work experience. They can call in at any time for help and support.

Safeguarding

We are committed to ensuring the safety of all our students through thorough safeguarding procedures. There is a Safeguarding Team led by Julie Ferman, Senior Leader for Student Well-being & Head of Year. Contact: j.ferman@wsfc.ac.uk

If we have a concern about your son or daughter's safety and feel they may be in need of protection we have a duty to refer this to children's social care (Family Front Door). The College's Safeguarding Policy is available on our website.

What Transport Options Are Available?

Buses

Those students who live more than three miles from the College, by the shortest walking route, can apply for a bus pass subsidised by the College and County Council. Application forms are available on the County Council website. Most students will have applied online in the early part of the summer term before coming to College. Please note the buses are organised by the County Council and concerns about their reliability etc should be directed to them.

Cars or Motorcycles

If your son/daughter wishes to bring a car or motorcycle to College, they must register their vehicle with the Student Finance Officer. On the College site and Nunnery Wood Sports Centre, parking is on a first come first served basis. If students park on Spetchley Road they are asked to be mindful of residential access.

Cycles

The College has a cycle rack but strongly recommends the use of secure 'D' or shackle locks to maximise security. The enclosed bike shed can be accessed using a card reader. Your son/daughter will need to see IT Support who will authorise their ID card for access.

What Code Of Behaviour Is Expected?

The College prides itself on the excellent conduct of its students and will expect your son or daughter to behave as a responsible young adult and display common sense and consideration for others at all times.

Alcohol and illegal substances

Alcohol and illegal substances must not be brought onto the premises and should not be consumed by students expecting to be in College for any remaining part of the day.

Dress

Dress should be functional and suitable for a working environment. Clothing or accessories that are distracting, offensive or prevent effective communication are not acceptable.

Smoking (except for the smoking toleration zone)

The College site is a no-smoking area and is only permitted in the smoking toleration zone. Students who wish to smoke must register their intention to do so with the Tutorial Hub. Once registration is complete, we would inform you of your son/daughter's wish to smoke at College and 'a new smoking student ID' will be issued. Only students who have registered in this way will be permitted to use the smoking toleration zone. Out of respect for our neighbours and the local community, students are also reminded that smoking is not permitted along Spetchley Road, Nunnery Wood or the immediate surrounding area. The rules on smoking also apply to e-cigarettes and all similar devices.

Mobile phones

Students must switch off mobile phones during lessons and whenever in a situation of formal contact with teachers.

Use of computers

Students are bound by the College's *Acceptable Use Policy*, the details of which will be made clear to students.

How Is Poor Behaviour Or Misconduct Managed?

The ethos of the College encourages a positive approach to study and learning and an environment in which students can settle contentedly and enjoy their work and leisure activities. A Classroom Code for behaviour will be outlined and enforced by all teachers.

Behaviour which detracts from these aims and the standards achieved is actively discouraged and will be regarded as misconduct in certain circumstances. Naturally the approach to problems of attendance and academic work is different from that to unacceptable behaviour.

If, without good reason, students fail to attend lessons or produce work that is set they may be subject to a hierarchy of sanctions that provide closer supervision in an endeavour to get their work up to date.

Parents will not necessarily be notified of minor misdemeanours e.g. a single absence from a lesson or missed homework but the College will endeavour to inform parents when the cumulative effect is detrimental to a student's studies, in the case of more serious issues or in the event of formal sanctions being applied.

The College's Student Conduct Policy is available on our website.

What Should I Do If Things Go Wrong?

The College is highly committed to maintaining the quality of its work and the explanation and presentation of its policies to students, parents and other members of the community. If you have a concern about any College related matter, please discuss them, in the first instance with the appropriate tutor or Head of Year.

A full explanation of the College's complaints procedures will be made available to you on request and the policy available on our website.

