

Guide for Parents

2023-24



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Welcome to Worcester Sixth Form College

We are delighted to welcome your son or 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 address some of the frequently asked questions by parents of students who join the College. Please keep it for future reference.

The College Year 2023-24

Autumn Term begins	Tuesday, 29th August 2023
Half Term	Monday, 30th October - Friday, 3rd November 2023
Autumn Term ends	Friday, 22nd December 2023
Spring Term begins	Monday, 8th January 2024
Half Term	Monday, 12th - Friday, 16th February 2024
Spring Term ends	Friday, 22nd March 2024
Summer Term begins	Monday, 8th April 2024
Half Term	Monday, 27th May - Friday, 31st May 2024
Summer Term ends	Tuesday, 16th July 2024
May Day holiday is Monday, 6th May 2024	

INTRODUCTION

During your son or daughter's time at College we aim to develop their independence and resilience to ensure that they are well-prepared for their next step, whether that is university, employment or an apprenticeship. We strongly believe, however, that at this stage of their lives and education, there remains a very important role for you as parents. Consequently, the College welcomes and encourages the support and involvement of parents and carers 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.

You can expect the College to provide:

- Regular information about your son or daughter's progress at College;
- A personal link via your son or daughter's dedicated tutor and opportunity to meet with them if you, or we, need to discuss an aspect of your son or daughter's progress;
- An opportunity to meet with the Principal, Vice Principal and other members of the Senior Leadership Team at the Evening for Parents' of New Students in September;
- Parents' Evenings to discuss your son or daughter's progress with subject teachers and their tutor;
- A prompt response to any feedback, query or concern;
- Contact from the College should we become concerned about your son or daughter's attendance or progress;
- Regular email communication including a half-termly newsletter, details about forthcoming events and anything else significant that arises. If you do not appear to be receiving email communication, please check that the email address we have for you is correct.
- Representation on the College's Local Governing Body through the Parent Governors.

Please can you support your son or daughter by:

- Accessing information about their progress in academic subjects via the Parent Portal. Please discuss this with them regularly, in particular, the key Summary Assessments;
- Informing us if you become concerned about any aspect of your son or daughter's progress;
- Supporting them with getting into good study routines including completing work outside of lessons;
- Encouraging them to meet the expectations outlined in this guide including full attendance;
- Reporting any absence to the College via the Tutorial Hub or the Parent Portal;
- Avoiding any holidays in term time unless in exceptional circumstances;
- Informing us of any changes to personal circumstance e.g. change of address, domestic situation.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

TUTORS

Your son or daughter will have a tutor who is the first point of contact whether you have concerns about their progress, general wellbeing or a more general query. Your son or daughter will have a timetabled tutor group session once per week but can arrange to meet with their tutor on other occasions. You can find out who your son or daughter's tutor is by viewing their timetable on the College Portal.

PASTORAL LEAD & HEADS OF YEAR

We have a Senior Leader for Student Progress & Pastoral Support, Graham Williams, who has overall responsibility for pastoral care and for overseeing the work of the Heads of Year and Tutors. Tutors may refer questions or issues to Heads of Year or to Graham regarding their tutees if they remain unresolved, or are of a serious nature. The Heads of Year are Ellie Clayton, Jemma Finnimore, Sara Payne and Carl Rusby. The name of your son or daughter's Head of Year can be found on the Portal.

COMMUNICATION

You will receive regular communications from the Principal and information about forthcoming events which will also be shared on the College's website and social media platforms. To ensure that you remain up to date, please remain subscribed to College communications and check that we have an accurate email address for you.

REPORTING ON STUDENT PROGRESS

Your son or daughter will receive regular feedback on their work and formal feedback via Summary Assessments on four occasions in year 1 and twice in year 2 if they are on A Level, Applied Level 3 or T Level courses. These Assessments will be based on a mock examination, test or significant assignment. Teachers will make it clear as to whether your son or daughter is on track to meet their Target Grade and, where appropriate, indicate any areas for improvement. This information will also be made available for you to see on the Portal.

All of our teachers understand the importance of parental involvement in ensuring the best outcomes for students and will be happy to respond to any queries or feedback you may have about your son or daughter's progress.

PARENTS' EVENINGS

Parents' Evenings are likely to be held remotely using SchoolCloud software, with appointments booked online. You will receive an invitation prior to each event which will explain how to make and join appointments. All Parents' Evenings take place between 4.00pm and 8.00pm and will be held in January and June.

SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS

SUBJECT SUPPORT

The College is committed to providing our students with additional support to ensure that they

are successful in their studies. Teachers have time allocated to them to be able to provide subject support whether this is part of a timetabled workshop, small group work or on an individual basis. Please encourage your son or daughter to take full advantage of these opportunities and to speak to their teacher if there is work that they do not understand or need more support with.

TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO COLLEGE

We understand that sometimes the transition from school to College can seem a challenge. We have a strong system of support available so please encourage your son or daughter to talk to their tutor, teacher or Head of Year about any concerns or questions they might have as soon as possible. It is a good idea to encourage them to participate in enrichment or other cross-College activities as these are a great way to make new friends and will make them feel part of the College community.

LEARNING SUPPORT

To enable us to offer the best possible support we need to be aware of any special needs your son or daughter may have. We have a wide selection of support for exams including extra time, reader, scribe, use of laptop and smaller room. All exam support has to be agreed with examination boards by producing medical or assessment evidence.

One to one support is offered to assist students with their specific learning needs. Learning Support Assistants can support those students with complex needs to include in-class support and individual support lessons, plus examination support. Drop-in support is also available as and when required for help with research, assignments etc. If you have any questions about the support that is available for specific learning needs, please contact Sara Payne, Learning Support Manager (sara.payne@wsfc.ac.uk).

SAFEGUARDING & SITE SECURITY

We are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all our students through robust safeguarding procedures. Our Safeguarding Team is led by Dan Collins who is the College's Designated Safeguarding Lead. If you have any concerns of a safeguarding nature, please contact dan.collins@wsfc.ac.uk. The College's Safeguarding Policy is available on our website.



To ensure that our students can learn in a safe, secure environment, the College has a number of site security measures in place. When students arrive at the main entrance they will need their student ID card to be able to gain access. Please remind your son or daughter of the importance of bringing their ID card to College. A Site Security Officer will be on hand to welcome students as they arrive and help should there be any issues with access to the College building.

If your son or daughter will be walking to College via Nunnery Wood, the gate at the back of the College will be open at the start and end of the day. Entrance to College at all other times is via the entrance or exit drives on Spetchley Road.

CAREERS ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

Your son or daughter will benefit from a range of different sources for advice and guidance. Tutors and teachers are well placed to be able to offer advice on a wide range of academic and career related issues. Where more specialist advice is needed, you may wish to suggest that your son or daughter visits Student Services. They can book individual interviews with specialist careers staff and there is also a drop-in enquiry service available from 8.30am - 4.30pm every day during the term to help with quick queries or to provide information.

Student Services is where our students will benefit from higher education, apprenticeship and careers advice and guidance, support with work placements, volunteering and employment opportunities. In addition, the tutorial programme and career specific Professional Programmes (enrichment options) will give your son or daughter relevant background information to help with employment, higher education choices and applications.

COUNSELLING

The College operates a counselling service every weekday and your son or daughter can book an appointment with the College Counsellor directly through Student Services. We would strongly encourage students to speak with their tutor or Head of Year in the first instance so that any concerns can be addressed as soon as possible. We also have a Mental Health and Wellbeing Mentor to provide support and advice to our students.

FINANCIAL HELP

Depending upon household income, personal circumstances, and travel arrangements, students at Worcester Sixth Form College can apply to the College's Financial Support Scheme. Financial support includes a travel allowance and free meals. Full details are available on our website or you can contact the Student Finance Officer (jenny.jones@wsfc.ac.uk) for any help with issues relating to financial support.

FAITH SUPPORT

A room is available for private individual prayer. We are keen to celebrate different religious beliefs and to promote greater understanding of them within College. The College has two Chaplains who meet with students each week.

OUR EXPECTATIONS

ATTENDANCE

Research shows that students who attend 100% of their lessons will achieve on average two grades higher than students who attend only 80% of their lessons. We, therefore, expect students to be present at all lessons. Please remind your son or daughter that lessons are not optional and that if they have any unavoidable appointments such as dental check-ups, then these should be organised outside of College time.

You will be kept informed of your son or daughter's attendance via the Portal and, if we become concerned that your son or daughter's attendance has fallen below the expected level, then a tutor or Head of Year will contact you. If this happens, please support us in emphasising the importance of good attendance. Please report any absence via the Portal on every day that your son or daughter is absent. If attendance falls below the expected level and there is no improvement, disciplinary processes will be followed.

We do know that there can be valid reasons for absence and the College will respond sympathetically and provide support where appropriate. Please contact your son or daughter's tutor in such instances.

If your son or daughter becomes unwell whilst they are at College, they are asked to report to the Tutorial Hub. If they are too unwell to travel home alone, we will contact you. It is, therefore, very important that we have up-to-date 'emergency contact' details for you.

Please ensure that family holidays with your son or daughter are not organised during term-time. The College calendar for term-time and holidays for 2023-24 is distributed to all students and a copy is included at the start of this guide for your information. It is also available on the College website.

We recognise that on occasion, exceptional circumstances may apply. In such circumstances, please ask your son or daughter 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 completed within agreed deadlines.

Under no circumstances will the College authorise students to take holidays during term-time unless it is a family holiday authorised as a consequence of exceptional circumstances.

BEHAVIOUR

We are proud of the behaviour of our students and have a record of excellent standards in this respect and the College will support our students in meeting our high expectations.

All students will receive a copy of the Student Code of Conduct and their tutor will discuss this with them in an early tutorial session. The Code of Conduct outlines the high expectations that we have about student behaviour and emphasises, in particular, that all members of the College

community should be treated with courtesy and respect. You can find the Student Conduct Policy on our website or it can be made available on request.

Please note that parents will not necessarily be notified of minor misdemeanours, e.g. a single absence from a lesson or missed homework, but the College will 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 Student Conduct Policy includes an outline of when the College would reserve the right to restrain and search as well as where exclusion or suspension might apply in instances of misconduct.

PROMOTING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Worcester Sixth Form College is committed to achieving equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership and pregnancy.

Any form of bullying or harassment is unacceptable in the College community and we expect that all students, staff and visitors are respected and valued equally. We take a firm line on bullying and harassment of any kind and any such incident would be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

In the unlikely event that your son or daughter experiences any form of bullying or harassment, please advise them to speak to their tutor, teacher or Head of Year or contact the College directly on their behalf.

PROMOTING BRITISH VALUES

The College promotes British Values including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Any student who holds or expresses views or exhibits behaviours that are contrary to these values will be challenged.



SMOKING & VAPING

The College is a non-smoking site (including the use of e-cigarettes or similar devices). Students must also not have in their possession any smoking/vaping paraphernalia whilst at College. Students who do not follow these rules will be sent home and paraphernalia confiscated. Repeat offenders will be subject to formal disciplinary procedures. Please note that smoking and vaping are also prohibited on Spetchley Road and the children's park on the Wildmore estate in response to concerns expressed by our neighbours and members of the public. Please also note that the Wildmore children's play area is also out of bounds to students during the College day.

WHAT DOES MY SON OR DAUGHTER DO AT COLLEGE?

STUDENT TIMETABLES

Classes are held each day between 8.50am and 4.10pm except on Wednesday afternoons when academic lessons finish at 2.30pm to facilitate opportunities for enrichment. You can see your son or daughter's timetable on the Portal.

PROGRAMMES OF STUDY

Students are required to study 3 Advanced Level subjects or the equivalent and will not be permitted to drop below this commitment unless there are exceptional reasons for doing so, e.g. health issues that are supported by medical evidence.

Tutorials, Independent Study and Core Maths (where applicable) will also be added to their timetable. There is an expectation that students use the remaining time in the College day to prepare and consolidate their learning. Students will also have additional timetable commitments for their chosen enrichment activities such as a Sports Academy, the Ambition Programme or Professional Programme.



TIME COMMITMENT TO STUDIES

A Level, Applied Level 3 and T Level courses represent a significant step up from GCSEs in terms of both the level of difficulty and the amount of work required for success. In order to ensure your son or daughter is successful, it is important that they fully appreciate the amount of time they need to spend studying outside of timetabled lessons.

The Worcester Working Week encourages our students to develop good study habits and identifies 32 hours of study for each student made up of timetabled lessons, independent study and time for enrichment and personal development. This will help them to be successful at College and ensure they are ready for university or employment.

Homework will normally be set every lesson although the nature of this work and the time needed to complete it will vary. Often students will be required to complete tasks or revisit activities prior to their next lesson. This enables topics to be explored in greater depth and ensures that students make the best progress.

Students are also expected to regularly review their notes and to make sure these are well organised, detailed and without gaps. Please encourage your son or daughter to keep notes, essays, tests papers etc in a ring binder as this will help them with their organisation and will prove useful when they need to revise. You can also encourage your son or daughter to regularly check their understanding by looking back over completed notes, repeating tasks and activities or asking for help if there are any significant gaps in their knowledge or understanding.

As the exams approach students need to attempt practice papers which are readily available online and which will be signposted by subject teachers. Your son or daughter can increase their chances for success by going beyond the work completed in lessons and by completing additional tasks and practice papers which their teachers will be pleased to mark.

Parents can help their son or daughter develop as an independent learner by encouraging them to establish good routines including studying when they are not in lessons. 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. In addition facilities are also available with Wi-Fi for quiet study, internet research or project work.

Students need to take responsibility for their own learning and ensure that part-time jobs and similar voluntary commitments do not prevent them from succeeding. As your son or daughter is in full time education during their time at College, they should not engage in paid or voluntary employment during the College day, without the consent of their tutor or Head of Year. 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 and provide support where appropriate.

EXAMINATIONS

The College will automatically enter and pay for student examinations in all of their subjects providing they meet certain obligations such as attending lessons, completing work and submitting coursework on time. Exam entry deadlines will be published on the Portal for you and your son or daughter to see. There are occasions where exam fees may apply e.g. a missed examination or a re-take of one previously taken at College, and your son or daughter will be notified in such instances.

PARENTPAY & PURCHASING FOOD

As parents, you will have received a letter containing your activation details to enable you to set up a ParentPay account. All payments to the College (e.g. Refundable Deposit, Printer Credit, College Fund and all other payments for activities and events) should be made via ParentPay. Further information can be found on the ParentPay website, alternatively please contact the Finance office by telephone or email (finance@wsfc.ac.uk).

Our friendly Cafeteria staff provide a range of hot and cold food and drink between 8.30am and 2.30pm each day. If your son or daughter has a specific dietary request, please encourage them to speak to the Cafeteria team who will be happy to help. The College operates a cashless catering system for food purchases in the Cafeteria. Funds can be added to student ID cards via ParentPay or we accept contactless card payment.

TRAVELLING TO COLLEGE

The Student Finance Officer is based in Student Services and will be able to provide help and support with issues relating to transport. If your son or daughter wishes to park at College, they must register their vehicle with the Student Finance Officer. Please note that parking is allocated on a first come first served basis. The College has a secure bicycle compound. Students will need to register with IT Support and will then be able to access the compound using their student ID card.

WORKING TOGETHER TO MAKE A SUCCESSFUL START

As a parent, your input is extremely important to us, therefore, if you have a comment, any feedback, a question, a request for information or a concern please get in touch with the College. No matter how trivial or serious it may seem at the time, we want to respond as quickly and positively as we can. Similarly, please encourage your son or daughter to ask any questions they might have, to request help if needed or to raise any concerns they might have as we want their time with us to be both enjoyable and successful. We are here to support your son or daughter to ensure that they make an excellent start to their time at College.

WORCESTER

WORKING

WEEK

make time for success

As a minimum students should follow the Worcester Working Week of 32 hours, however, in the run up to the examination period this will be expected to increase.

