

DORMSTON SCHOOL

Frequently Asked Questions 2020

We have created the following Frequently Asked Questions to answer some of the most common questions that parents/carers and our new students may have about life at Dormston. These FAQs have been broken down into 3 sections; Teaching & Learning, Blended Learning and Pastoral. Please also note that full and further information can also be found in our **Prospectus & General Information Guide** which this year has been given out hard copy to all our main Year 6 Primary Feeder Schools. Our Prospectus & Information Guide is also available for you to view on our School Website (About Us > Prospectus). Should you not have received a hard copy of this prospectus and General Information Guide and require one please contact the school on 01384 816395.

Teaching & Learning FAQs

1) How much homework will my child receive?

Homework is set according to a timetable published each September. It is organised as follows:

Frequency of Homework *per timetable cycle of 2 weeks*

Key Stage 3	Year	7	8	9
English, Mathematics and Science		2	2	2
Languages		1	1	1
Design Technology		1	1	1
Geography		1	1	1
History		1	1	1
Religious Education		1	1	1
Art		1	1	1
Computing		1	1	1
Key Stage 4	Year	10	11	
Science		2	3	
English		3	3	
Mathematics		2	2	
Full GCSE Options		2	2	
RE		2	2	

2) How are students rewarded for their hard work?

Rewarding students for their hard work is essential to developing and securing positive relationships with our students as well as being an important way of recognising that hard work brings reward.

Students can earn 'Quick Notes' from subject staff during lessons which are always very well received. Staff are invited to nominate for our 'Learner of the Month Award' and there are also Head Teacher's Commendations awarded for outstanding effort and hard work. Students are awarded House Points by their subject teachers each half term in recognition of their efforts. As a reward for those students who work the hardest we host regular Pizza and Film Reward Evenings in our Theatre. Students are also awarded Bronze/Silver/Gold/Platinum ties based on the House Points they earn (300/600/900/1200). These are usually awarded at our special Tie Award Evenings.

3) What do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of your school? What will you do to address those weaknesses?

Our strengths are many and include; consistently good staff attendance, staff-student relationships, staff-parental relationships, and a broad and balanced curriculum that is not cut short at the end of

Year 8 (as is the growing tendency across the country at the moment) and a united staff who work tirelessly to achieve the very best outcomes for each and every child.

An issue that we are currently addressing (which is reflected in the national picture) is the attainment gap between students in receipt of student premium funding and those who are not. Our new PP Strategy will soon be launched which seeks to reduce this gap. Current provision includes differentiation in classrooms (it is also referred to in our Marking Policy) and the provision of materials for eligible families.

4) How many times throughout the year will I receive academic information on my child?

Academic data is released via GO4Schools 3 times a year for all year groups.

5) How are higher ability learners supported?

Each member of teaching staff is responsible for providing an appropriate level of challenge and support for the students they teach. Differentiation isn't only used to provide additional support for students who may be struggling but is also there to ensure that each child feels challenged in their learning. Some subjects also set students according to their abilities which provides an atmosphere of mutual support and challenge in the classroom. Subjects such as Maths, Science and MFL have tiered exams and staff teach accordingly.

We pride ourselves at Dormston on building challenge from the outset. A wealth of data is available to teachers including a termly reading score and we require staff to plan for appropriate challenge. Whilst challenge is central to lesson planning we also have a wealth of non-required work which we encourage our most able to complete. Our knowledge organisers signpost our learners to additional extension activities and our five year learning journeys build on prior knowledge and progressively develops challenge year on year.

6) How are SEND students supported?

An important part of our transition programme involves liaison with primary schools. During these meetings important information is gathered about students including any SEND. During the first half term of Year 7 the Learning Support Team will offer a combination of one to one support and small group intervention such as 'Fresh Start'. Parents/carers of students with EHCPs will be contacted by our SENCO, Sue Cooper to help the transition run smoothly and discuss support.

7) In terms of staff, how many subject staff do you have covered by agency teachers?

None. All subjects are taught by specialist teachers. English, Maths and Science are slightly 'over'-staffed.

8) What equipment will my child need?

It's very important that children come to school fully equipped for each day. Please see the list below detailing the **basic requirements** for all children:

- pencil case;
- blue/black pens;
- pencils;
- ruler;
- protractor;
- rubber;
- pencil sharpener;
- calculator (scientific);
- compass;

- PE kit and bag – see uniform list;
- water bottle.

Blended Learning FAQs

Due to the current situation and in line with Government recommendation, in order for students' learning to continue from home should the need arise, we are now developing a Remote Learning Policy. This details our commitment to the provision of sequenced and meaningful learning opportunities for children who may be self-isolating. Each department has developed individual learning journeys which map against our 5 year curriculum. This seeks to reduce the impact of missed learning due to COVID-19 by providing learning opportunities for self-isolating students which mirror the learning opportunities in the classroom.

1) How many hours per day of lessons can my child expect to receive if they are at home?

The aim is, where possible, to replicate the school day (whilst acknowledging that nothing completely replicates the experience of being at school with a class teacher and other students). Students can expect 5 hours of remote-learning if they are not in school. This will include a combination of on-line resources, recorded and 'live' lessons.

2) Will there be live lessons?

Yes, there will be a number of 'live' lessons that your child will be invited to 'attend'.

3) How will my child's attendance be monitored?

A register will be 'taken' during each lesson.

4) Are the online lessons interactive?

Yes, there are a number of ways that your child will be questioned to check for understanding. Students are also invited to email their class teacher if they are having problems understanding the work covered.

5) We do not have access to the Internet at home – what should we do?

As a school, we acknowledge that there will be some students in this position. Please, as a matter of high importance notify the Strategy Leader for your child's year group if this is the case so that we can rectify this matter. Please note also, that if your child does not have access to a computer at home, the school will need to know this too.

6) Will the lessons be quality assured?

Yes, staff will invite other members of their department to be part of the lesson (this is also very helpful when responding to questions and queries posted by students).

7) How should students record the work they complete?

As has been the case until this point, students take their exercise books home with them and should use them if this is the case. It's important that the work in exercise books is sequenced and well-organised so that revision and retrieval practice is well facilitated.

8) What can I do to help my son/daughter?

Our previous lock-down experience and the subsequent feedback from parents, carers, teachers and students was that routine was extremely important in helping students stay organised and self-motivated. Adhering to their normal school timetable/alternative timetable will help in this regard. Having a quiet space to work in is also beneficial although we know that this isn't always possible in busy households.

Regular breaks including being outside will also help with the learning process as well as helping students to maintain perspective at this worrying time.

Pastoral FAQs

1) What should I do if my child comes home and reports bullying and what is your anti-bullying policy?

Contact your child's Form Tutor in the first instance. Your child will then be spoken to about what has been happening and then decisions will be made as to the nature of the situation. Bullying is always dealt with quickly and is thoroughly investigated by our extremely professional and experienced Pastoral Team. No school can say with 100% certainty that bullying never happens but what we can say is that there are very few instances of real bullying and those that do happen are dealt with effectively. For further details, please see our anti-bullying policy which can be found on the school website.

We have a zero tolerance approach to bullying at Dormston School and we are committed to providing a safe and caring environment for all our students. Any allegations of bullying are investigated thoroughly with appropriate sanctions and/or restorative justice being applied. We take part in the annual anti-bullying week and we have a team of anti-bullying ambassadors.

We have an Anti-bullying Policy on our website which all staff adhere to. Full details of this can be found under **Policies > School Policies > Anti-Bullying Policy**. We monitor and analyse data regarding all behaviour issues and put restorative work in with individuals or groups and also monitor the impact that this has. We have just achieved our 'All together Programme Silver Award' which took into consideration the views of students in the school and the progress we have made over the last 3 years with bullying. In addition to this we have been awarded the Diana Award in recognition of our whole school efforts in this regard. As part of this we train students to be anti-bullying ambassadors. We are aiming to be a 'telling school' and the culture we would like to achieve is that students take ownership of bullying within the school and report any disrespectful behaviour.

2) What are the rules on jewellery?

- earrings - one plain stud in the earlobe only;
- no other piercings are allowed;
- rings - one only;
- no bangles;
- NO jewellery at all in PE lessons.

3) What are the rules on mobile phones?

Mobile phones are allowed on school premises and under normal circumstances students are encouraged to hand them in to Student Reception (which is fully secure). During the current difficult circumstances however we are no longer able to offer this facility. Should students still wish to bring their phones with them to school, they must be on silent and remain in their bags for the duration of the school day. Failure to adhere to these rules will result in confiscation of the phone. Please note should your child's phone be damaged or stolen, the school can accept no responsibility for this.

4) Who should I speak to if I have any concerns about my child in the first few weeks at secondary school?

Your child's Form Tutor will usually be the first port of call. They are the person who will see and speak to your child twice a day and will; therefore know them best (at least in the first few weeks). It maybe that the issues you are concerned about are better dealt with by your child's Head of House or a particular subject teacher but your first port of call should be your child's Form Tutor who will refer the matter on if necessary.

5) Are there lockers?

No, there are no lockers at school. Children are expected to carry their belongings around with them during the school day.

6) How do I buy lunch/school materials for my child?

Children will be registered during their first day of school and will then be able to access funds. If your child is eligible for Free School Meals, you will need to apply through the LA and then the money will be automatically allocated. There is a daily limit to how much each child can spend per day.

From September 2020, the school has moved towards a completely cashless payment system within school. We therefore ask all parents/carers to use our e-payment system to pay for dinner money and other school related fees such as trips, revision guides and school related equipment. This can be done online using a secure website called ParentPay.

ParentPay offers you the freedom to make payments whenever and wherever you like, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week - safe in the knowledge that the technology used is of the highest internet security available. You have a secure online account, which can be set up by using a unique set of activation codes. These will be posted to you before the start of the new academic year. You will be prompted to change these and create your own secure Username and Password for future logins. If you have two or more children at the school, you can merge their accounts once logged in via the My profile tab of your account.

We ask that you set up your account at your earliest convenience. Please do not hesitate to call school or email churst@dormston.dudley.sch.uk if you have any problems. If you already have an account on ParentPay please log in to your existing account and select the add a child option. You can then use the User Name and Password we provide to identify your child and add them to your account.

Making a payment is straightforward and ParentPay holds an electronic record of your payments to view at a later date; no card details are stored in any part of the system. Once you have activated your account you can make online payments straight away.

Once you receive your activation letter please, click Login and activate your account using the codes provided. For anyone who is unable to register an account please email churst@dormston.dudley.sch.uk. Upon your consent students will be linked with their own personal finger print identifier to allow them to access their money via tills, alternatively a dinner money card can be issued.

7) What if I have concerns about what my child is eating/not eating during the day?

Our lunch time staff are fully trained to look out for any child whose eating habits suddenly change. Should they have any concerns, they will contact your child's Head of House who will then speak with you should it be necessary. It is also possible to see what your child has bought during the day should you have any concerns in this area.

8) My child has allergies – what should I do?

Our catering team as well as the teaching staff receive annual training on what to do in the case of a student experiencing allergy (including anaphylactic). However, we are a nut free school and all food is clearly labelled with its ingredients. Should your child have an allergy, this will also appear on the till to alert the staff who will then be able to double check the ingredients.

9) What should I do if my child forgets something for their school day?

As a school, we aim to encourage our students to be as independent and as organised as possible right from the start. To this end, we would ask that forgotten items such as lunch, water, home work is NOT dropped off at school. Please be assured that should your child forget their lunch/a drink we will provide them with one.

10) What kind of support will my child receive in the first few weeks of term?

Transition to secondary school can be an anxious time for students and parents; however we often find that it is the parents who struggle the most. Once children have experienced their transition days, there are very few issues in September. Indeed, the feedback we usually receive is that they no longer want to go back to primary but want to start secondary school straight away. That said, every child is different and there may well be teething problems in the first few days. Our Pastoral Team is highly experienced in identifying potential issues, combined with the information from our feeder primary schools, we try to address these issues during the transition days in the summer. Students are encouraged to join extra-curricular clubs as soon as possible and the first half term’s PHSE topic is all about making friends and adapting to change. We also have a wonderful team of Year 11 Mentors who work with younger children to develop friendships and confidence.

11) What should I do if my child struggles to make friends?

Let us know as soon as you think there could be an issue (especially if there were similar issues in primary school) so that we can support as soon as possible. Friendships do change in secondary school and this is to be expected. Encouraging your child to join clubs is one way to help them make friends. Not all children need a large group of friends; indeed one or two close friends with similar interests tends to work well and often proves the test of time.

12) My child is the only one coming from his/her primary school. How will school support his/her transition?

Students who come alone from their secondary school may feel a little more anxious; however, each year we have around 12 students in this position who we support through an additional transition day prior to the official 2 days. We usually find that the vast majority of pupils settle very quickly.

13) What is the school’s extra-curricular provision?

There is a wide range of extra-curricular provision which aims to cater for all tastes; from archery to football and lots in between. Extra-curricular is one of the three ways in which your child can earn House points for themselves and for their house so we strongly encourage students to take part. Unfortunately however, in the current climate we are very restricted as to what we are able to offer but pre COVID-19 the following activities were available for students to access at either break-time/lunchtime or after school.

Table Tennis	Year 7 Football Practice	Let’s Cook
Lunch Club	Music Club	KS3 Science Revision Club
Orchestra	Origami Club	STEM Science Club
Book Clubs	DofE	Eco Club
Netball Club	Drama Club	Boxing Club
Dance Club	Year 10 Debate Club	Digital Creators Club
Badminton Club	Mindfulness Club	Basket Ball Club
Peaky Blinders’ Club	Boys’ Football Practice	Girls’ Football
Creative Writing Club	Crest Award Science Club	Choir
Anime Club	The Apprentice Club	

14) My child's attendance in primary school was below your school target of 97%. Is there any support available to help us meet this target?

Excellent attendance for every child is key; if children aren't at school their learning and progress will be affected. As a school, we do everything we can to encourage excellent attendance and when parents/carers share this value then attendance tends to be consistently good throughout a child's time at school. If your child's attendance at primary school was an issue, you will be invited to discuss the issues or problems with your child's Form Tutor, Head of House, Attendance Officer and Assistant Head Teacher. That said, for many children who didn't enjoy primary school, the transition to secondary is just the fresh start they need and they tend to thrive.

15) If my child breaks a bone can they still come to school?

In this circumstance a risk assessment will be carried out by our School Nurse, Kerry Lewis and our Business Manager, Philippa Gamble. Adjustments to some lessons are made (for those upstairs) but normal learning usually continues.

16) Can my child bring water into school?

Yes. Staying hydrated throughout the day is beneficial to learning as it improves concentration. However, drinks should be limited to water or squash only and energy/fizzy drinks are not allowed. They will be confiscated and returned to your child at the end of the day.

17) Are there any rules on what can be included in my child's packed lunch?

We would always request that you pack a healthy lunch including fruit and vegetables and not too many sweet treats. Once again – NO FIZZY DRINKS.

18) What happens when the weather is bad during social times?

Each year group currently has its own covered social zone and so when the weather is inclement, students will have somewhere warm and dry.

19) What happens if my child is unwell at school?

Should your child report feeling unwell at school, they would be seen by our School Nurse if the member of staff speaking with the child deem it necessary. The School Nurse can administer paracetamol (with your written consent) and in the majority of cases, children go back to lesson. Should the School Nurse believe that your child needs to be sent home, you will be contacted.

22) What is your Behaviour Policy?

Students are made very aware of our expectations through our 'Prepared for Success' Strategy which seeks to ensure the highest standards of behaviour are maintained. Underpinning the policy is a firm belief that no child should steal the learning of others; and therefore at times it is necessary to remove students from their classrooms. Good behaviour choices are supported by our extremely experienced and enthusiastic Pastoral Team who aim to help children make the right choices and become good citizens for the future. We expect all students to abide by our five core values; these being Effort, Knowledge, Respect, Responsibility and Resilience. We aim to foster a supportive, caring and respectful environment for all who study and work at Dormston School.

23) What career development programme do you have and how do you place students into WEX?

We have a Careers Policy that supports students from Year 7 to Year 11. A copy of the current careers programme and careers learning journey is on our school website. We usually offer a one week's Work Experience placement for Year 10 students. Students (with support from parents & school) are tasked with finding their own placement. All students are expected to secure a placement. As a school we do have a 'bank' of employers who offer placements on an annual basis including NHS, police, local primary schools

and armed forces. In line with current COVID regulations, the careers programme will be adapted as and when necessary - this may include virtual delivery.