

Charitable Objects of St. Catherine's School

The Objects for which the Company is established are to promote and provide for the advancement of education by providing, conducting, governing, carrying on and maintaining in the United Kingdom, or elsewhere, a boarding or day school or schools for girls in which the teaching shall be in accordance with the principles of the Church of England.



**OVERSEAS BOARDING PUPILS: ADMISSION AND INTEGRATION
SENIOR SCHOOL POLICY**

This policy was introduced formally in the academic year 2009 –10 in response to the experience of overseas boarders in previous years and to a slightly larger intake of international students in September 2009. It sets out some of the activities which have been undertaken to ensure good integration of overseas boarders since 2000, but also adds some new strategies devised by the Boarding Housemistresses as part of the Boarding Development Plan 2008-9. It also incorporates the Senior School Policy for Speakers of English as an Additional Language (written in 1998 and reviewed and continued in June 2007). This policy has been reviewed and adjusted in 2014 in the light of evaluation of the practices in the previous edition.

A. INTRODUCTION

St Catherine's is an academically selective school with high standards and a firm belief in providing a rounded education for girls. The majority of girls study nine subjects at GCSE, five (including General Studies) at AS and three or four at A2 level. Almost all girls go on to higher education, the significant majority attending top universities in the UK and abroad. The School has day, boarding and weekly boarding pupils and as a result, is attractive to students from all over the world, as well as the local area. The School welcomes this opportunity to admit girls from a wide range of cultures and works hard to integrate all its students and allow them to learn much from an exchange of cultural perspectives.

Life beyond the curriculum is also of paramount importance and it is essential that overseas girls do not become isolated and experience only a closed and narrow education at St Catherine's. It is sometimes clear that they and their parents have chosen the School based solely on its high academic outcomes, and are not initially ready to devote any time to the extra-curriculum. This can also be a feature of their cultural background and the school systems from which they come. However, the School is proud of its tradition of offering high academic standards as part of a broad education in every sense of that word. It is therefore important that the students be persuaded of the need - and the enjoyment - of being fully involved in every aspect of School life.

Accordingly, we insist that all girls must be present at the beginning and end of every term so that they join in house competitions, seasonal events, and end-of-term celebrations and traditions, and can be congratulated for their own contributions to the School. Parents are required to submit the dates and times of end-of-term flights at the beginning of each term. In addition, regular monitoring by the Boarding Housemistresses, the School Housemistresses, School House Tutors and Sixth Form Tutors takes place, as appropriate, to ensure that overseas girls are able and willing to access all parts of the extra curriculum and all aspects of School life.

B. ADMISSION BELOW SIXTH FORM

Entrance below Sixth Form is on the basis of the School's own examinations which include a Verbal Reasoning Test, Mathematics Paper and written English paper, taken at the School where possible, or sent abroad and invigilated by arrangement with the applicant's school or the British Council, and an interview/discussion with the Head of Boarding. A confidential school report

including an appraisal of oral skills in English is also required. The older a girl is on entry, the more important this becomes since there is limited time before external examinations in which girls can gain the necessary facility in English to do justice to their academic ability.

Once accepted, all girls in Middle and Senior Schools will usually be presented for GCSE English and English Literature. Every girl is expected to attend normal lessons in the majority of subjects but depending on age of entry, certain subjects may not be studied e.g. a foreign language if she has no background knowledge. This allows extra time to improve the girl's proficiency in English itself by wider reading and closer focus on other prep.

Where appropriate and if they so wish, girls will be presented for GCSE level in their native languages.

C. ADMISSION TO THE SIXTH FORM

For 16+ entry, all applicants sit an adult VR Test and a general paper in English containing both comprehension type questions and a piece of extended writing. This is taken at School where possible, or sent abroad and invigilated by prior arrangement at their current school/ the British Council. A confidential report, including information about the standard of English is required.

The successful applicants at this stage are then interviewed by the Director of Studies and Head of Boarding, either at School or via SKYPE. We also expect girls to have certificated evidence of proficiency in English that is acceptable to UK colleges and universities e.g. IELTS, Hong Kong Certificate of Education, the West African Examination Council and Senior Secondary School Certificate if they have not taken GCSE/IGCSE English. They can obtain IELTS if needed during the course of their 6th Form studies.

Final decisions are then made and places offered, after which the School will contact the new student with information about her shadows and, in the case of Sixth Form entrants, a reading list of accessible books in good English and further advice on preparing to live and work in an English-speaking environment. (See Appendix I – Notes for Guidance on Students with English as an Additional Language.

D. INDUCTION: the first week

On arrival at School, all overseas students who have English as a second or even third/fourth language are warmly encouraged to integrate with their English speaking peers. They consolidate their English best through practical experience. They have also been accepted at the School, and therefore, along with all other girls, are expected to become fully involved with extra curricular life. In order to help them gain the necessary confidence to rise to this challenge, which for some may run counter to the school culture they have experienced previously and join in with activities and the house programmes/events the following practical arrangements and induction programme are therefore in place at the beginning of each academic year.

- in the second half of the Summer term prior to their arrival, new overseas boarders are allocated 2 shadows (following discussion between the Boarding Housemistresses, School Housemistresses and Head of Sixth Form), a day girl in her School House and a boarder who will share with her initially. In the Sixth Form, girls share double rooms; below this, they are in dormitories of between 2 and 6. The shadows make contact with the new pupil. As appropriate, the Head of Sixth Form, the Sixth Form Boarding Housemistress, the Main

School Boarding Housemistresses and the School Housemistresses write to the new overseas girls in their charge.

- dormitories are allocated (U3 – L5) and new girls share with existing boarders, none of whom share their native language and include the relevant shadows.
- all L6 girls arrive at school four days before the start of the year and take part in an induction camp under canvas with the whole year group. New overseas girls are put into carefully selected groups which include their shadows. The Head of 6th Form and Head of Boarding will run a twilight induction session on the first Friday evening of term designed to explain school structure and opportunities. Existing U6 overseas boarders will be invited for an informal Q&A session.
- at the first staff meeting of the year, the Head of Boarding will go through the list of all new overseas boarders, giving accurate pronunciation of first names (and abbreviations if relevant) and surnames. Great emphasis is placed on the potentially negative impact on the girls of incorrect pronunciation and a phonetic version of difficult names is provided to all staff for their reference.
- After High Table, the first formal event of the year for the boarding community, key staff are introduced e.g. nursing sisters, the School Doctor and Independent Listener (if available).
- New Sixth Form overseas boarders attend a meeting on the first evening with the Headmistress, Head of Boarding and Sixth Form Boarding housemistress to explain basic routines and reinforce expectations. This includes looking at the weekend programme and discussion of Church and Chapel attendance, and any additional religious or cultural requirements. In U3-L5 all new boarders are involved in their first house roll call meetings and welcomed there.
- All staff are badged to help new girls learn their names.
- Shadows take girls to first House meetings, lunch, activities and lessons.
- The first weekend sees a number of activities designed to help the entire boarding community bond, especially new girls. The Friday night is spent at a fun games party organised by the Senior Boarders and Resident Tutors. All Sixth Form full boarders attend and all U3 – U4 boarders, weekly and full.

On the Saturday, the U3 –U4 attend an on-site activity, other resident staff and gap students where team building activities take place. Overseas girls are placed in selected groups in which they will get to know a range of girls in the different year groups.

L5 and L6, with some U6 and U5 students, go to Guildford with their BHM's. They are shown the bus route and the location of key shops and banks etc.

On Sunday, the full boarders attend Chapel for the Annual Old Girls' service. After a barbeque lunch, an activity will be on offer; U3 overseas boarders join all other U3s for Fun Day.

E. INDUCTION: the next phase

It is of vital importance that the care taken recruiting and inducting the new overseas pupils is continued after the initial period. In the first few weeks after the girls' arrival, the following discussions/monitoring take place:

- the Sixth Form BHM confirms weekend activity choices with each new Sixth Form full boarder for the term. They are encouraged to sign up for several activities in order to take a necessary break from work and to experience more local and national culture in the UK. A minimum number of activities per term is stipulated initially in order to ensure that reticence is overcome and some risks taken which will help the girls to establish a good work/life balance as full boarders.
- all BHMs make telephone or e-mail contact with parents and /or guardians of all new overseas boarders and by the end of the first full week of term after the first weekend. They give the parents/guardian news regarding the settling in of their daughters/wards; the parents/guardians might also pass on some useful information given them by their daughters/wards. This process is valuable in itself and also builds a relationship between the overseas families and the School.
- the Sixth Form BHM discusses with each new overseas boarder which books have been read from the reading list sent to them before joining and ensures that each girl can access an appropriate radio station. The Middle School BHMs liaise with English Department staff to advise on private reading.
- the SHMs and BHMs check at House meetings/individual chats which extra curricular activities the girls have signed up for and ensure that what was said at interview is being undertaken e.g. joining a choir, playing tennis. Where necessary, current pupils will be asked to continue to accompany the new girls to these activities to make them feel increasingly secure in going along to take part. They will also ask about the shadows and check that the girls feel comfortable in their various situations.
- BHMs will communicate regularly with SHMs/Tutors concerning the new overseas boarders in their mutual care, and particularly regularly during the first few weeks.
- the Headmistress and Head of Boarding will have morning break with all new overseas boarders (Sixth Form and Main School separately) by early October.

F. EVERYDAY LIFE: fully integrated

The level of pastoral care afforded all girls in the School is constant throughout the School year and the monitoring of the overseas girls' welfare as the year progresses happens as part of School life. However, it is crucial that the integration of overseas boarders is a two-way process and that the School is aware of and embraces the cultural wealth that the overseas students offer, further making them feel welcome and valued. There is a number of ways in which this can be encouraged:

- the BHMs/SHMs will establish each overseas girl's National Day and awareness of these is to be raised in the School e.g. by girls talking about home life to their School or Boarding Houses in the appropriate week; giving presentations in assemblies: BHMs and SHMs will meet early in September to discuss such ideas and plan with girls. The Catering Department

will recognize such days with food from the relevant country – and include the four UK nation days too. A national flag for each day should be prominently displayed in School and the information that it is that national day will be placed in the banner on the School Messaging System. The Sixth Form BHM will co-ordinate this and will publish on the Staff Room board and circulate to all staff, the list of national days that will be marked during that academic year.

- all overseas boarders – whether natives/citizens of other countries or temporarily resident in a foreign country – should have access to resources within the boarding houses which will help them to demonstrate to UK students the countries and cultures they represent, or in which they are currently living. E.g. Maps, posters, pictures and coffee table books should be provided as decoration/ready reference materials in corridors, common rooms or duty rooms.
- the BHM/resident duty staff at weekends encourage girls at weekends to cook/bake recipes from their own countries and to share them e.g. Sunday tea, Saturday supper. BHM or UK full boarders to be fully participant and offer typical English food in rotation.
- academic departments should be aware of events of particular national significance and encourage discussion of these as appropriate. E.g. Geographical occurrences, historical events, literature from different cultures etc.
- academic departments are asked to encourage an international aspect to certain topics/events e.g. Politics – electoral systems/democratic process; English – relevant international authors to be considered on World Book Day, reading of relevant poets on particular National Days (and make this even more inclusive by making more of UK poets on the relevant days).

St Catherine's is a happy and caring School where all girls are encouraged to fulfil their potential and support each other. The aim of this Policy is that all our students, regardless of their nationalities and cultural backgrounds, will respect themselves and each other and celebrate achievement. It is our hope that the rich variety of cultures will give rise to a real awareness of the international world in which they live and allow all the girls to realize the equal worth of each individual within the integrated community.

Mrs Lorinda Munro-Faure
Head of Boarding
January 2014

Signed:
Senior School Headmistress

Date

THIS POLICY WILL BE REVIEWED IN 2016/17.

APPENDIX i

NOTES FOR GUIDANCE ON SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Our EAL speakers will demonstrate at entrance the same intellectual levels as our native speakers; they will also have been examined in English and interviewed (at Sixth Form level) to ensure a high level of proficiency in oral English which will enable them to access fully our curriculum and integrate fully with their English-speaking peers. However, we acknowledge that they can sometimes face the additional challenge of achieving a sophisticated level of written English in order to take English medium examinations as they have opted to do.

Experience has shown that even girls of high academic ability are placed under considerable strain if they enter the School at senior level (L5 and above) with limited proficiency in formal written English. This is especially true of subjects that are heavily language based or with a high technical language component. Accordingly, to ensure that no girl faces unreasonable expectations, as a School we feel it is right to require evidence of such proficiency as indicated above before students are admitted and we also advise very carefully on subject choices, particularly at AS and A2 levels, to suit the candidates profile whilst building her linguistic confidence.

Once accepted at Sixth Form Level, new international boarders are sent advice by the School that they should listen to a news programme in English on a daily basis prior to their arriving in the UK in order to practice listening and comprehending English used at a fast pace e.g. BBC World Service Radio, BBC World News TV, CNN etc. We also suggest that on arrival they continue with this as part of their daily routine. A reading list is also enclosed listing some enjoyable, short books in contemporary English which also offer some cultural insights into life in England, from which they are asked to select and read a few e.g. Bill Bryson, *Notes From a Small Island*.

Where appropriate, girls are entered for external examinations in their native languages. A Modern Foreign Language Head of Department is in charge of entering the girls.

The Study Skills Coordinator is aware of the profiles of all the overseas students admitted to the School and liaises with the boarding, teaching and pastoral staff as appropriate to monitor how well they settle in and offer advice or guidance where necessary. If it proves necessary, in exceptional circumstances, and after discussion with the Head of Boarding, specific EAL lessons can be arranged. However, while a student may tend to believe that the only way to cope with her lack of confidence with spoken English is to have one-to-one tuition with an adult, our experience suggests that our entry procedure ensures high levels of competence and a need only for saturation and practice. Occasionally, therefore, a few Study Skills sessions may be necessary to assist overseas students in organizing their programmes and gaining confidence in their own ability.

In either case, this specialist tuition is chargeable as an extra on the girl's end-of-term bill, as stated in our Prospectus Annual Information Booklet. Parents are contacted to advise them of the School's judgment on the need for extra tuition. They are informed of the current rate charged for each lesson and are asked to return a signed permission slip enabling the tuition to be given. Reports on the girl's progress in such tuition sessions are written at the appropriate time in the year. The length of the course of lessons is decided by close discussion between the Head of Boarding, the Learning Support Co-ordinator, the Director of Studies, the Sixth Form tutor/SHM or Tutor and subject teacher(s).

Mrs Lorinda Munro-Faure – Head of Boarding
January 2014