Boarding at Sevenoaks
Dear Parent or Guardian

Thank you for your interest in boarding at Sevenoaks. This booklet will give you a flavour of what we believe boarding is all about and some key information about our boarding houses and Sevenoaks town. Much more is available on our school website.

I joined the Sevenoaks boarding community in 2000 and have held a number of boarding roles since then, including 12 years as a housemistress. From the first day I was struck by the warmth and sense of family; the strength of community in our boarding houses is outstanding. During their Sevenoaks careers, your children will learn a whole variety of skills, not just from the academic staff they meet, but also from their peers and the house matrons. Students learn organisation, tolerance, and perhaps most importantly, just how much benefit hard work can bring. As they get older they become gradually more independent, but there is always the support of staff to help them navigate school life and the higher education choices that will follow.

The pandemic has been a challenging time for all of us, and boarding has adapted in many ways. There have been practical changes to daily life to help reduce infection, a larger isolation facility to look after unwell boarders, the introduction of pre-flight testing on site and constant adaptation of boarding activities as the regulations changed. We have continued to do whatever we can to support our boarders and their families, and offer a broad education, whether that is in person or online.

During their time here, and at reunions after they have left, our students repeatedly tell us how much they enjoyed their years of boarding at Sevenoaks School. Staff feel the same way. Working with such enthusiastic and engaging young people is a wonderful experience.

Nichola Haworth
Deputy Head Boarding
Email: njh@sevenoakschool.org

Boarding at Sevenoaks School

‘Boarding pupils felt that the boarding community leads by example and influences significantly the high levels of integration, cultural tolerance and understanding seen throughout the school. Inspectors agree.’
ISI Report 2017

We offer modern and family–friendly boarding for almost 400 students. Our boarding community is the size of many whole boarding schools, and our seven well–appointed boarding houses are imaginatively managed.

Five boarding houses cater for pupils from ages 13 to 18: School House, Johnsons and Aisher House for boys, Sennocke and Park Grange for girls. The IC and GIH are houses for Sixth Form students.

The most rewarding part of my role as Matron is being with and caring for such a fantastic group of students. Their energy and enthusiasm for life is infectious, their ideas stimulating. They are just great fun to be with. There’s never a dull moment in boarding at Sevenoaks; what more could a Matron wish for every day!
Matron, GIH

Boarding at Sevenoaks is fun, comfortable and busy. A full programme of sporting, cultural and social activities runs every weekend. Families are welcome to visit, and pupils may go home at the end of the school day on Saturday once sporting commitments are finished. Around 80 per cent of our boarders stay in school for the weekend.

Housemasters and Housemistresses share with their team of resident and non–resident staff and house matrons the duties and responsibilities of caring for children who may well be away from home for the first time. Boarding can provide an excellent transition from home to independence and maturity; the Sixth Form boarding houses, in particular, enable students to enjoy the benefits of boarding at an important stage in their school careers, and to prepare for life at university.
Sevenoaks is one of Kent’s most interesting towns. Surrounded by countryside and picturesque villages, and close to some of England’s finest heritage and garden attractions, the historic town has a vibrant community and boasts a theatre, a library, a leisure centre and a variety of social activities.

Sevenoaks School is situated at the top of the bustling High Street, within walking distance of an array of shops, coffee bars and restaurants. Behind the school is Knole, one of England’s largest country houses, set within a thousand-acre deer park and managed by the National Trust. The park is open to the public for walking, running and recreation, and is accessible from the school grounds.

An advantage of Sevenoaks is its transport links. The town is located not far from the A21 and M25, and is only 30 minutes from Central London by train, with excellent rail links to London Charing Cross, Waterloo and London Bridge. Gatwick Airport and the Channel Tunnel are both within a 45-minute journey by car, making travel to and from the school very easy. Sevenoaks is also less than an hour away from the magnificent Kent coastline, the Dover cliffs, and the popular towns of Rye, Hastings and Eastbourne.

Sevenoaks is a very attractive town and its safe and friendly environment makes it an ideal place for students to live, grow up, develop some independence and contribute to the community.
Aisher House

Contact: gjw@sevenoaksschool.org

The team

The Housemaster, Mr Gareth Willis, formerly Housemaster of School House, is also a Geography teacher. He lives in the house with his partner, Louise, who is the matron, and their two daughters.

“Developing house spirit and teamwork is a vital aspect of life in Aisher. Through fostering an environment for the Aisher students to settle, bond and cement their friendships, we ensure that they are able to flourish within the wider Sevenoaks School community.

Gareth Willis, Housemaster

“Sixty Middle and Upper School boys (age 13 to 18 years) from across the globe find an unassuming, relaxed and happy second home in Aisher, forging lifelong friendships.

The newest member of the Sevenoaks boarding community, Aisher House is situated in the heart of the Park Grange estate, alongside Park Grange and the IC. Completed in 2019, Aisher is well located, close to the academic and co-curricular facilities but also tucked away from the immediate hustle and bustle of the busy school.

Study bedrooms are clustered around their own social and communal hubs, linking up to provide all year groups with light, modern facilities. Single and double bedrooms are en-suite, with boarders in the younger years sharing larger rooms. The north lawn provides a great site for recreational sports while the sunny terrace outside the kitchen is the perfect collective locale.

Each boarding house is a close-knit community committed to supporting a student’s development and instilling a respectful confidence, and every member of Aisher House should feel that they have something special to offer.
The Girls’ International House

The GIH was opened in 1977 as the first boarding house for girls. As the name suggests, the house has a great tradition of internationalism. Our entire Lower Sixth intake consists of students new to Sevenoaks School. Roughly one quarter of the boarders are British, although at any one time over 25 different nationalities can be represented. This international perspective is something that GIH is very proud of. The boarders very much enjoy living together as a community and the kitchens, common rooms and garden are always alive with enthusiasm.

The distinctive building was originally a number of adjoining private residences on the High Street. These houses vary in style, with parts dating back to the reign of Queen Anne.

As is appropriate for a Sixth Form house the students have a large say in how the GIH is run. They are represented by the Head of House and the House Council. This body makes many important day-to-day decisions about the house.

What I really like about Sevenoaks is its warm and friendly atmosphere. Everyone here is so helpful, and the teachers and boarding house staff especially are very accommodating to all my needs. Sevenoaks is definitely a second home.

Lower Sixth student

The team

The Housemistress, Ms Emma Delpech, is a practising artist and Art teacher. She lives in the house with her son, who recently completed the IB at Sevenoaks.

Contact: ebd@sevenoaksschool.org
The International Centre, or IC, is a Sixth Form boarding house. It was founded in 1962 and moved to its present site in 1997. The comfortable, purpose-built accommodation enjoys excellent facilities and is set in pleasant surroundings, with views over the sports pitches, a short walk from the main school campus.

The IC draws boarders from all over the world to study the International Baccalaureate. Some 25 nationalities are typically represented, with a substantial complement of British students. The experience of sharing with such a diverse population leads to tolerance and understanding of a great range of cultures and forges friendships for life.

As with GIH, the students’ opinions on the running of the house are greatly valued and the elected chairman and committee preside over a weekly meeting also attended by the Housemaster and his assistants.

The team
The Housemaster, Dr Steve Owen, was formerly Head of Chemistry and has taught at Sevenoaks for many years. He lives in the house with his wife Christa, who is also part-time matron, and their two daughters.

It’s hard to find a more progressive and culturally diverse boarding school in the UK. In Sevenoaks you feel respected and admired for who you are. I am delighted to be part of the international community here at school that can call Sevenoaks their second home.

Upper Sixth student
Johnsons has been a boarding house since 1927. Originally a family home, it was presented to Sevenoaks School by Charles Plumptre Johnson, one of our kindest benefactors. It is now home to over 50 boarders and staff who are very proud of the oak–panelled building and beautiful gardens.

The boarders are aged 13 to 18, and approximately 50 per cent come from outside the UK, some from as far afield as the USA, Russia and Hong Kong, as well as many from Western Europe. With around ten boys in each year group, the atmosphere in the house is homely and caring, and everyone respects one another. Johnsonians are very proactive in organising formal and informal events for both boarders and day pupils.

"One great thing about being a boarder is socialising with the other houses. I think we are more than just classmates; we are a very tight community. I would say that coming to Sevenoaks has been the best decision of my life."

Year 9 student

The team

The Housemaster, Mr Ian Fletcher, teaches Chemistry. During his time at Sevenoaks he has also spent many years as the Director of Service. He lives in the house with his wife Georgina and their two children.
A beautiful, elegant, ragstone house, Park Grange was built in 1869 as part of an estate for George Berkley, who later became a governor of Sevenoaks School. The house was bequeathed to the school in 1938, was a boys’ boarding house from 1948, and became a girls’ boarding house in 1988.

Today, Park Grange provides accommodation for boarders aged 13 to 18. The house is in a wonderful position, in close proximity to the main school campus, with views across Knole Park, the rooftops of Sevenoaks and the school’s own grounds. The main house retains many of its original features and is full of character, combining the friendly atmosphere of a family home with excellent facilities. There is also an attractive, purpose-built Sixth Form wing set around a peaceful courtyard. The superb central kitchen, complete with the old cast iron stove, provides a focal point for different age groups and nationalities to meet and socialise.

The Housemistress, Mrs Astria Trigger, teaches PE at the school, and lives in the house with her husband and son.

Sevenoaks is one of the friendliest places I know. I don’t think it’s possible to laugh more and learn faster than I have in the last two years.

*Year 11 student*
School House

School House is the original boys’ boarding house of Sevenoaks School, formerly housed in Old School but now located on a beautiful Victorian estate not far from the main campus.

The house is home to boarders aged 13 to 18, with around ten in each year group. There is a tremendous spirit of respect and cooperation within School House, which provides a comfortable, friendly and supportive environment, with good facilities and a low ratio of boys to a room. House unity is encouraged through engagement in a wide range of common activities, including a house ball, trips and charity work.

The House Committee meets regularly and comprises a team of Sixth Form House officials including the house captain, two vice-captains, house secretary and year group representatives.

“Boarding is really enjoyable. The social spirit within the community of the houses, coupled with the ambitions to succeed, creates a great atmosphere and allows you to make friends easily. I would recommend boarding to someone who was unsure whether it’s for them or not. The opportunities socially are enormous and, after all, it’s a once in a lifetime experience!”

Year 11 student

The team

The Housemaster, Dr Tom Findley, teaches Chemistry and works with the Learning Support team. He lives at School House with his wife and children.
Sennocke House was built in 1986 as a modern boarding house, and provides light, airy, comfortable rooms for girls aged 13 to 18.

Sennocke overlooks an extensive garden and is situated on the main campus, within easy reach of school facilities and with views of Knole Park. Life within the house sees a friendly mixing of year groups as the Sixth Form supports the younger members of the house and organises house activities. Sennocke is also a diverse house, in that over half the boarders either live abroad or are foreign nationals. We are fortunate to have two family kitchens where the boarders enjoy baking and cooking at weekends. There is a very large common room, providing enough space for the whole house to gather to socialise or for house events. Sennocke is a lively and stimulating place in which to live and learn, where students feel happy, secure and confident.

I love the routine, waking up every morning to people I respect and just knowing that in that day something I’ve been taught or who I sit with at lunch will help me grow in some way.

Lower Sixth student

The team

The Housemistress, Mrs Tara Edwards (Chemistry), lives in the house with her husband, Dr Matt Edwards, (Head of Sixth Form).
Boarding Facilities

In the house
We try to make boarding houses as homely as possible. While there are minor differences between individual houses, all have access to a variety of indoor and outdoor leisure activities. Gardens are extensive, and the house kitchens are always popular. These are stocked with a wide range of food from the school’s Catering department, including milk, bread and fresh fruit daily. Each house has wifi and a computer suite as well as a small library.

On campus
The school Library is open until 20:30 every weekday night and 08:00–16:00 on Saturdays. It contains a large collection of books, DVDs, CDs, audiobooks and journals complemented by access to online research and other digital resources. It is fully equipped for private study with wifi, desks and computers.

In The Space performing arts centre, music practice rooms are available for use every morning and evening and at weekends. Sixth Form boarders have some access to the Art rooms in the evenings and at weekends.

The Sennocke Centre is available for use by boarders in the evenings. The facilities include a swimming pool, sports hall, fitness suite, dance studio and indoor squash and tennis courts. Various supervised activities take place before and after school. The school’s running track is popular in the Summer term.

A wide range of co–curricular activities is available to boarders, and many after–school clubs. As they are living on site, boarders are ideally situated to make the most of the facilities on offer.

The Health Centre
The Health Centre is situated within the school grounds to provide healthcare to all students and employees of Sevenoaks School. Its aim is to contribute to the health promotion and safe working environment of the school. We seek to do this through holistic care both within the school and with the help of community resources.

Students are free to come at the appropriate time to the Health Centre for advice or treatment. Nurses are fully trained in many specialised areas. Students are encouraged to discuss medical matters with the nurse before seeing the doctor as treatment for many minor illnesses can often be completed without the doctor’s intervention.

The Health Centre team also includes trained counsellors who are able to support pupils.

All boarding pupils register with one of the school’s doctors at the Amherst Medical Centre, a General Practice in Sevenoaks. A doctor visits the school Health Centre each weekday. This includes regular attendance by both a male and female GP. A nurse is available from 08:00 to 17:00 Monday to Friday and all of Saturday when there is school.

Housekeeping
All boarding houses have their own team of cleaners led by a housekeeper. There is also a houseperson attached to every house, who completes day–to–day maintenance and repairs. Bedrooms are cleaned every weekday and thoroughly spring–cleaned every term. Students are expected to keep their rooms tidy and their beds made.

Included in the school’s termly bill is the weekly laundering of uniform and bedding. The timings for the collection of this laundry is clearly displayed in every house. All dry cleaning will be added to the bill at the end of each term. Every house has its own laundry, equipped with washing machines and tumble–driers. Depending on the age of the student, the rest of the weekly laundry is completed by either the student or the housekeeper.

“Boarding provision is good everywhere…This school understands about sofas, carpets and big TVs. Huge dining room with vast choice of truly tempting food.

Good Schools Guide"
Catering

Resident students are provided with a good quality catering service, using fresh and, where possible, locally produced ingredients. The Whole School Food Committee works with the Catering department to suggest ideas for themed evenings and to make sure boarders’ views are represented.

House Stores
In addition to this, boarding houses are supplied daily with milk and bread, and weekly with a house stores allowance. Items available include spreads and preserves, biscuits, eggs, a variety of breakfast cereals, a selection of fresh fruits, tea, coffee and sugar.

Dietary Requirements
We can cater for pupils with individual dietary requirements, including those of a medical nature. Vegetarian and vegan options are always available, and menus reflect the diversity of our student intake.

We provide three meal services per day:

07:30–08:15 Breakfast
A selection of breakfast cereals.
Crumpets, fruit muffins, Danish pastries or chocolate croissants.
A varied selection of cooked breakfast items.
Home–baked hot rolls and toast.
A choice of three fruit juices, tea, coffee, hot chocolate, cappuccino, mocha.
Seasonal cut fresh fruit bar and a self–help yoghurt bar.

13:05–14:00 Lunch
A home–made fresh soup served with croutons and fresh bread.
A choice of three or four hot main dishes, including a vegetarian option.
A salad bar with a range of salad options.
A choice of desserts, including fresh fruit and yogurt.

17:45–18:15 Supper
A choice of three hot main dishes, including a vegetarian option.
A choice of desserts, including fresh fruit and yogurt.
Common Questions

What happens at weekends?
Once school commitments are complete (including sports), students are able to return to the house to relax. From Monday morning to Friday lunchtime school meals are compulsory, but at the weekends there is an element of choice. Depending on their year group students can choose whether to eat in the Dining Hall, cook for themselves or go to a restaurant in town. Many students choose to visit other boarding houses at this time.

In a busy six–day week, boarders tell us that they want the freedom to have a relaxed Sunday. Breakfast is replaced with brunch at 10:30, and boarders are able to make use of school facilities (the sports centre and performing arts centre) or those in the town (Knole Park, coffee shops, cinema). With parental permission, Sixth Form boarders may visit London. We run at least one Sunday trip each half term, eg Thorpe Park, paintballing, ice skating.

At Sevenoaks we believe in flexibility, so the only weekend when students have to stay in at the weekend is the very first one of the academic year. At other weekends, provided all the relevant permissions have been sought, students may go home or stay at friends’ houses, returning by 21:00 on Sunday evening.

What are Exeat weekends?
There are five weekends a year where there is no Saturday school. Boarders go home to parents or guardians on the Friday night to get a well-earned break.

What are Sevenoaks boarders like?
Our aim is to produce sociable, mature, courteous and active students who enjoy being part of the community. While there is no particular type of student that we are looking for (in fact variety of personality is one of the great strengths of the boarding experience), boarders are keen to contribute a great deal to school life.

What ICT access is provided, and how is it monitored?
Each of the houses has a computer room and wifi. Boarders can connect to the school network in order to access the internet from their rooms. Naturally the school blocks unsuitable websites, and restricts access to gaming and social websites during the school day and the allocated homework time in the evening. The school is proactive in addressing the opinions of the students to see if their needs can be accommodated. Younger students hand in their phones and laptops overnight.

How is work supervised?
Each house has allocated evening prep time, where students work at their desks. Members of the teaching staff are on duty in the evening and visit each student, offering help with any difficulties and ensuring an appropriately studious atmosphere.

Are boarding students required to have a guardian?
The Governors of Sevenoaks School insist that every pupil whose parents are resident abroad must have a suitable guardian living in this country. The guardian must be at least 25 years of age and live close enough to the school to carry out their responsibilities, including hosting the boarder when the school is closed. The school writes to all guardians setting out their responsibilities, and asks them to confirm in writing that they accept the arrangements. For parents who are unable to appoint a guardian from their own family or acquaintances, we suggest that they refer to the AEGIS website (www.aegisuk.net) as a starting point. We do not, however, arrange for guardians to be appointed. Parents are therefore responsible for the welfare of their children while staying with the guardians concerned.
A Boarder’s Day

Wake up call 07:00–07:30
Breakfast 07:30–08:15
Registration/Assembly 08:30–09:00
Lessons begin 09:00
Morning break 10:50–11:15
Lunch break 13:05–14:20
Lessons end 16:10
Co–curricular activities 16:15–17:45
Supper 17:45–18:15
Homework time 19:00–21:00 *
Free time 21:00–bedtime

* Boarding houses may have slight variations on these timings.

Bedtimes are as follows:
Year 9 22:00
Year 10 22:15
Year 11 22:30
Sixth Form 23:00

The Sevenoaks Boarding Ethos

The school aims to provide its pupils with a happy and secure learning environment. Sevenoaks hopes to furnish its boarders with a structured, relaxed, consistent and friendly home in which to develop into young adults, full of self–esteem, with a developed sense of responsibility and a deeply held academic rigour. It is our belief that young people thrive on high expectations and plenty of justified praise. Our many boarding staff are genuinely conscientious, committed, caring and approachable.

We expect our pupils to:

- be courteous
- be respectful of others and their environment
- be supportive of others
- be tolerant
- show a commitment to all that they do
- play an active part in the school community

Communication is the key. We encourage our pupils to speak up about anything that is of concern to them. They are made aware of the channels of communication open to them at the beginning of the academic year. Parents must feel free to contact house staff at any time about any matter.
Further information about boarding at Sevenoaks School

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