WELCOME TO BRADFIELD

Welcome to Bradfield College. We are delighted that you are joining our community in September - a place where character development, lifelong friendships and an education for life are forged.

At Bradfield, we believe that education is far more than what happens in the classroom. Our Year 9 Faulkner's boarding environment offers a unique opportunity for pupils to thrive in a setting that fosters independence, responsibility, and resilience, all within a supportive and nurturing community.

It is perfectly normal for pupils (and parents!) to be nervous about the transition to senior school, and we have found that it's often the little worries that can germinate over the summer holidays. This document is therefore designed to guide you through the frequently asked questions and provide you with a clearer picture of Bradfield life.

We look forward to getting to know you and your family, and to welcoming you to a place that many proudly call their term time home.

Richard Penny
Deputy Head Pastoral

New Faulkner's Pupils - FAQs for Parents

How many pupils share a room?
Room size varies from 2-5 in Faulkner's, although this includes day boarders as well as boarders. Day boarders may have a dedicated bed if there are spare, but otherwise they have a desk and wardrobe. Day boarders may leave before prep, after prep or after social time at 2100. Day pupils will share one or two larger rooms where lockers, desks and wardrobes will be provided. Day pupils will routinely have gone home by 1800 each day. All rooms in Faulkner's are en suite.

How do you decide who shares a room?
The make up of rooms is designed to diversify rather than intensify friendships groups, and a strength of Faulkner's is the year-wide bond which carries pupils through into their Senior Houses. Initially, consideration is given to mixing up clusters of pupils from the same previous school, and mixing day boarders, boarders or overseas pupils. In the final term pupils are more likely to share with others who are going to their senior House. For the other half terms, pupils can express a preference for who they may like to be near and who they may like some space from. It is impossible to satisfy everyone, so we talk extensively about patience, resilience, empathy, perspective and the benefits of a broad friendship group. Please resist the temptation to tell your child you will get their room changed.

What happens at weekends?
Saturday is a normal academic morning with lessons until 1200, although some pupils may be used as guides for the weekly Open Mornings and a handful of sports teams may leave early for fixtures. Pupils should expect to play sport for Bradfield on Saturday afternoons, with the finish time varying depending on whether the match is home or away and has a uniform or staggered start (e.g. hockey where there are phased push backs). After sport lots of pupils go home for the weekend, but those that stay in have social events organised on Saturday evening and transport provided on Sundays (after brunch) locally or to visit Reading. If another adult is taking your child home from sport, please let the staff member in charge and the House team know in advance.

What is the food like, and can I bring tuck?
The food at Bradfield rightly has an excellent reputation. There is plenty of choice and they can cater for all allergies or intolerances. In addition, there is the "Stunt Pavillion" where they can buy snacks at certain times of day. Most pupils bring in modest amounts of food which they store in tuck boxes in their rooms. As we have pupils and staff with serious allergies we do not allow any items containing nuts onto the College site. Chewing gum is not allowed. All meals other than Saturday lunch are taken in the Faulkner's Dining Room which is conveniently located next to House. Pupils are registered and staff are always present.

What happens if my child needs help in the night?
There are always duty staff on call in the evenings, possibly including the HsM, Matron or other resident staff. Pupils can either ring the doorbell or call the duty number from the handset on the wall. If necessary, pupils will be taken to the Medical Centre to rest or be treated overnight. Faulkner's staff are very approachable and the pupils quickly get to know Dr Grinham, Mr Fox, the Deputy HsMs, four Matrons and resident tutors.

What if I think my child is being bullied?
The first question for your child is "Who have you told"? There are lots of ways they can report unkindness, either in person with numerous staff or online using Report Concern. Dealing with the issue in school allows a timely, impartial and contextual response. Whilst not all unkindness is bullying, it is important that we are able to act on thoughtless unkindness so please don't advise your child to suffer in silence or to "kill with kindness". Education, reflection, reparation and sanction are all possible outcomes depending upon the context, duration and severity of the bullying. Our expectation is that Bradfieldians are not bystanders in person or online.

How much access do the pupils have to their mobiles and laptops?
Faulkner's pupils have a "managed device" which is a laptop with a keyboard. It has everything they need to study at school but has controls to prevent social media, gaming and the installation of VPNs. They can be controlled in lessons and monitored remotely. Mobile phone access is in the evening for 45 minutes before supper in order to allow digital downtime and in person socialising after prep. At other times if they need to call home, they can use the House phone.

Does Bradfield offer flexi-boarding?
Bradfield has day pupils (who come as early as 0800 and stay until 1800), day boarders who can come earlier and stay until 2100 if they choose, as well as having the possibility to stay over on up to five nights per term. Boarders may either go home at weekends (returning on Sunday evening or Monday morning), or are welcome to stay all weekend. We strongly encourage UK families to host overseas boarders so they can experience a "typical" weekend of British home culture. Our approach is family friendly and flexible. There are no "closed weekends" where they have to stay in, although Saturday lessons and fixtures are an expectation. Other than in exceptional circumstances (such as on pastoral grounds agreed with the Deputy Head) boarders do not go home during the week. We do provide additional mattresses for events such as the Sunday night of Goose Weekend.

What is Goose Weekend?
On the second weekend of the Michaelmas Term there is a House and College bonding event culminating in House Song on the Sunday night. Senior Houses undertake a number of challenges, activities and social events over the weekend. In our experience Faulkner's pupils are tired by the end of week 2, so they go home on Saturday evening, and return on Sunday afternoon ready to prepare for their House Song in Greeker.

Who should I speak to if I have a question about co-curricular activities (sport, music, drama, dance)?
It depends what the question is. Routine sports fixture details and team sheets will be on SOCS, where we aim to select teams for Saturday fixtures by 7pm on a Thursday evening. At the start of term, it can take a few weeks to accurately place pupils into teams appropriate for their playing level. Your support in encouraging your child to be patient if they feel they are in the 'wrong squad', would be appreciated. Each term we see significant movement between squads with pupils often moving through several different teams. As we work to educate the pupils about the importance of commitment, we would ask that you work to support their participation in Saturday fixtures. If there are exceptional cases where they need to be absent from a fixture, we would ask that this request is sent to your child's HsM at least four weeks in advance. This provides the necessary time for Heads of Sport to monitor any absences, thus ensuring we can honour our planned fixtures. For other queries it is best to go via the tutor who will then redirect to the relevant Head of Sport, Director of Sport, or Head of Drama, Music and Dance.

Can I come to House at any time to drop off belongings during the week?
We all forget things from time to time, and it can reduce stress if you liaise with matron to drop in items. She will be able to advise on the best time when someone will be in House, and few pupils are likely to be around. Please fight the temptation to use the opportunity to try and meet your child or to take them for a walk as this can be upsetting for others. We welcome parental partnership, but for safeguarding reasons parents should not routinely be on the school site unannounced apart from for fixtures or calendared events.

How can I best support my child through their boarding experience/homesickness?
It is both an exciting and potentially unsettling time when pupils move to "big school" (for parents as well!). The pupils are busy and quickly find their feet so do try hard to give them some space. If they are on the phone every day updating you then they are missing social time when they could be making friends or having fun. The House staff are very experienced and will reach out if they think you need to be contacted. Sometimes increased contact with home can make it harder so please avoid the temptation to be in touch with them during the school day on iMessage or email as it is distracting, disruptive and can reduce the likelihood that they will self solve their problems or talk to House staff. Homesickness hits different pupils at different points.

Am I allowed upstairs in the boarding house when collecting or dropping off my child?
For safeguarding reasons (pupils may be changing or showering) parents are only allowed upstairs on the first day of each term with permission of staff to help drop off bags. The pupils have plenty of time to unpack and make their own beds, and this also facilitates their introductory chats and initial bonding.

What should I do if I'm going to be abroad?
If parents are abroad, please contact Matron and list a nominated short-term guardian. These are rarely used, but it is important to have someone we can call in case of illness or injury if a pupil needs some time away from school.

What if I would like my child to miss some school?
There is strict statutory guidance from the Department of Education around school attendance and the College is required to communicate with the Local Authority when absence reaches certain thresholds. Requests for absence in term time need to be agreed with the Second Master's Office (via the pupils Housemaster or Housemistress) but are only given in very exceptional circumstances.

Does the College offer transport to and from school for pupils?
At the weekends and on exeats and half terms, we run transport to and from London for boarders. In September 2026 we are launching a series of daily services for day pupils and day boarders to the surrounding areas. These daily services arrive by 0750 in the morning and leave at 1800 in the evening. Details of ll our transport services, including how to book and pay, can be found here https://www.bradfieldcollege.org.uk/college-life/transport-links/

What if my child who is a Day pupil wants to stay for an evening activity?
Day pupils can stay after 1800 if they have an activity in the evening. There will be an additional charge of £12 for supper and supervision until the activity starts and it is the parents' responsibility to collect their child as soon as the activity ends. Alternatively, day pupils can go home and then return at the time the activity starts.

Can Day pupils visit Boarders and Day Boarders in their rooms?

The Day girls and boys have their own room(s) in Faulkner's where they have space to study and relax. These rooms are configured differently to the Day Boarders' rooms as they don't need an occasional bed (which the Day Boarders need access to). During any free time in House up to 6pm all pupils may visit each other in their rooms. If Day Pupils in Faulkner's stay for an evening activity and have time between supper and the activity starting, they can do prep in the Day pupils' room as we do not allow any pupils to move between rooms during prep.

Useful Links
https://www.bradfieldcollege.org.uk/article/faulkners-the-unique-benefits-of-a-boarding-house-for-year-9/ https://www.bradfieldcollege.org.uk/faulkners/life-in-faulkners/

WELCOME TO FAULKNER'S

Sarah Grinham
Housemistress,
Faulkner's Girls

James Fox
Housemaster,
Faulkner's Boys

Who am I?

Sarah: I have been at Bradfield College for six years, alongside my husband Matt, who is Head of Politics, and I have been Housemistress of Faulkner's Girls since 2022. I am an experienced scientist with a BSc and a Doctorate from the University of Birmingham and in the early stages of my career held postdoctoral research positions in medical science, which gave me a strong foundation in analytical thinking, research methodology and scientific communication - skills that continue to inform my teaching today.

Following my time in research, I moved into education and have since enjoyed a varied career that spans both academic and pastoral roles as a Head of Biology and Head of Year. These roles allowed me to support pupils not only in achieving academic success but also in developing confidence, resilience and a sense of balance - something I see as vital in education.

In addition to being a member of staff, I have also been a parent at Bradfield, which gives me a unique perspective on College life. I have one son at university and another who has just finished at Bradfield. Experiencing Bradfield both professionally and personally has deepened my appreciation for the school's values, its community, and the opportunities it provides for young people.

James: I am an Economics and Business teacher and have been Housemaster of Faulkner's Boys since January 2020. I completed a BA in Coach Education and Sports Development at the University of Bath graduating with First Class Honours where I met my wife, Katie.

Having attended Bradfield as a pupil, I returned as a member of staff in September 2014. As well as recently working with Mr Chatwin, the Head of Performance Football, to help coach the twice ISFA Cup winning Boys 1stXI Football team for the last 3 years, I have also coached a variety of sports including Hockey, Cricket and Netball. I feel co-curricular balance is hugely important in pupils achieving their academic potential and am confident that we can find a program for each and every pupil to look forward to each week.

Katie and I have a son, Noah, who will be starting Year 5 in September at St Andrews and who your children will no doubt get to know quickly given the amount of time he spends in the boarding house with me.

What are my passions and interests?

Sarah: Sport has always played a significant role in my life, particularly hockey, which I played for many years and through which I met my husband at Southgate Hockey Club where we both played. Although my playing days are largely behind me—my body eventually caught up with my enthusiasm—I still take great pleasure in staying active, particularly through cycling, walking and yoga, which help me maintain a sense of balance and wellbeing. These days, much of my sporting enjoyment comes from the sidelines, watching my sons play hockey and cricket, which brings me just as much pride and excitement as playing ever did. Away from the pitch, I enjoy being a member of a book club, which provides a lovely way to unwind with friends while exploring new books, sharing ideas and enjoying lively conversations.

James: My biggest passion is sport and in particular football and golf. I am a firm believer in the role that sport and physical activity has in providing balance to not only the academic commitments pupils have at school but more generally to the demands of day to day life. As someone who has played and coached a lot of sport I see the value in both participation but also in competition and believe that lessons learned in the sporting environment prove invaluable for pupils as they navigate the highs and lows that are part and parcel of being in a school like Bradfield. I am also fascinated by story-telling and as such you will likely find me emersed in
one discussion or another about a book I have recently read/listened to or a film, television series or documentary that I have recently watched. My boy shares this passion for story-telling so I have a weirdly good knowledge of all things transformers and anything that involves dragons.

What is my single biggest piece of advice?

Sarah: My biggest piece of advice to girls in Faulkner's is to be yourself and approach every opportunity with an open mind. This year is full of new experiences, some exciting, some challenging, but the more you put into it, the more you'll get out of it. Say yes to things, even if they're outside your comfort zone, and trust that each step, even the wobbly ones, will help you grow. There will inevitably be bumps in the road, but that's all part of the journey. What really matters is how you respond - use your friends, the House team, and the support around you to help navigate the tougher moments. That's how you build resilience and confidence. You'll also discover more about who you are and what really matters to you. Don't worry if everything doesn't fall into place straight away, give yourself time and space to figure it out. This is a year for learning, not just in the classroom, but about yourself and how you connect with others. Mistakes are part of that process, and some of the most important lessons come from getting things wrong. Stay open, be kind, and know that you're not alone - everyone around you is figuring it out too.

James: Whilst I would first and foremost echo what Sarah has said about the important of pupils being themselves and being patient when it comes to building the all-important friendships that will shape their Faulkner's and Bradfield adventure, I would add to that by encouraging both pupils and parents to take a leap of faith and put your collective trust in us and the support network that Faulkner's will provide. The tutor and matron team are here to help every step of the way but remember that sometimes the best type of support requires pupils to sit with discomfort and fail every now and again so as to have the opportunity to reflect and learn. Trust us to know when the right time is to step back and support from the sidelines and equally to know when to be more involved in the problem-solving process.

Ultimately, we all want the same thing which is for the young men and women in our care to thrive and flourish and if we all work together, we have no doubt that will be the case. As we earn your children's trust, we wil need your help to bridge the communication gap so please remember that we cannot solve problems we do not know about so I would encourage your first question to your son or daughter when they are struggling to be 'who have
you told about this'?

What is our Faulkner's ethos?

Our Faulkner's ethos is grounded in the approach to 'work hard, be kind and get involved'. As a team we value effort over output and want the pupils to see how rewarding hard work can be. We want pupils to make the right mistakes for the right reasons and then have the maturity to reflect and learn from the process of being accountable – nobody wants perfection. As pupils settle and their confidence grows, we want to help them to step outside their comfort zones and take advantage of as many opportunities as possible to try new things and meet new people. If they can do this then we have no doubt that the young people in this community will not only have a great deal of fun, but they will thrive and flourish in and out of the classroom.

Matrons' Top Tips

- Bedding: 2 sets of named, colourful bedding (pillow case & duvet cover) is perfect so it is easily recognised. We provide a duvet, pillow and bottom sheet, if one is sent from home please mark it clearly. Thin toppers are allowed also. Showing your son/daughter how to make their bed before they arrive just means one less thing for them to worry about. Day Boarding pupils are provided with everything if they stay overnight.
- Pack their favourite hot chocolate mug and a spork if they bring noodles in their tuck.
- A named water bottle is essential for Sports
- A second pair of trainers is a great idea for those wet weather days.
- Please name absolutely everything, the self-adhesive name tapes are great for shoes and a sharpie for toiletries, cases etc.
- Coat hangers are provided.
- Bringing some family photos, posters, battery operated fairy lights or a blanket will help to make their space personal and more homely.
- A combination padlock is advised for their lockable space.
- A battery alarm clock and a wrist watch are handy additions plus a power bank for charging their phones overnight.
- Avoid sending expensive items e.g. jewellery & toiletries
- Please remember, we are a nut-free school, when sending in tuck. This includes sesame.
- We can administer paracetamol, ibuprofen, antihistamine and hold these items in stock, please do not send them in. Prescription medication can be handed to us on arrival. Please keep in the original box.
- Sending a letter/postcard or a treat in those first few weeks is always welcome. Faulkner's postcode is RG7 6BF.
- Keep phone conversations short when they are settling in and please reach out to us with any concerns. Encourage your child to seek support from the House Teams, we are here to help.
- The School Transport Guide (https://www.bradfieldcollege.org.uk/college-life/transport-links/) will explain all the options that are available to you, please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions and we will be able to help.

Key Contacts

Faulkner's Boys

Matrons

Email: faulknersboysmatrons@bradfieldcollege.org.uk
Landline: 0118 964 703
Duty Mobile: 07769 933 778

Housemaster (James Fox)

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Faulkner's Girls

Matrons

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Housemistress (Sarah Grinham)

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