Senior School
Parent Handbook
2025 – 2026



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Pastoral Care for Ditcham Seniors

Pastoral care is at the heart of everything we do and is essential to ensuring that all of our children and young people have the best chance of success. Over their time with us, staff will work closely with your child in order to identify how best to meet need and enable them to thrive.

Each day begins at 8.40am with a tutor session. Our tutors should provide a consistent base and starting point for each school day. The tutor session will enable your child to get 'set up' for the day and have the opportunity to connect with peers whilst engaging in a range of purposeful activities.

Each year group is split into 4 tutor groups of approximately 12 pupils. Small tutor groups allow our tutors to build positive relationships with their tutees based on knowledge of each pupil. Tutors will generally 'follow' their tutor groups as they move up through the senior school, thereby developing strong working relationships with them. In most cases, your child's tutor should be your first point-of-contact for any pastoral issue.

In addition, each year group has a Head of Year who will work closely with your child and provide another layer of pastoral care during their time in the senior school.

The tutor teams for 2025/26 are as follows:

Year 7

Head of Year: Miss K. Snow katy.snow@ditchampark.com

- 7A tutor: Mr E. Williamson ed.williamson@ditchampark.com
- 7B tutor: Mr M. Sebastian-Todd max.sebastian-todd@ditchampark.com
- 7C tutor: Mr J. Hoad james.hoad@ditchampark.com
- 7D tutor: Mrs H. Baker heather.baker@ditchampark.com

Year 8:

Head of Year: Mr D. Leonard dan.leonard@ditchampark.com

- 8A tutor: Mrs R. Turner rosemarie.turner@ditchampark.com
- 8B tutor: Miss G. Brown georgie.brown@ditchampark.com
- 8C tutor: Mrs S. Cartwright sonia.cartwright@ditchampark.com
- 8D tutor: Mr T. Batchelor tom.batchelor@ditchampark.com

Year 9:

Head of Year: Mrs Y. Morris yvonne.morris@ditchampark.com

- 9A tutor: Mrs M. Webber melanie.webber@ditchampark.com
- 9B tutor: Mr G. Harris george.harris@ditchampark.com
- 9C tutor: Mrs B. Kelly belinda.kelly@ditchampark.com
- 9D tutor: Mrs S. Almeida-Field sofia.almeidafield@ditchampark.com

Year 10:

Head of Year: Mr J. Walton james.walton@ditchampark.com

- 10A tutor: Mrs S. Boyland stacey.boyland@ditchampark.com
- 10B tutor: Mr P. Swabey peter.swabey@ditchampark.com
- 10C tutor: Mrs K. Roberts karren.roberts@ditchampark.com
- 10D tutor: Mr M. Lyons michael.lyons@ditchampark.com

Year 11:

Head of Year: Mrs S. Whittle sarah.whittle@ditchampark.com

- 11A tutor: Mrs L. Surgeon lana.surgeon@ditchampark.com
- 11B tutor: Miss O. Bicknell olivia.bicknell@ditchampark.com
- 11C tutor: Mrs H. Drake helen.drake@ditchampark.com
- 11D tutor: Mrs J. Browning jane.browning@ditchampark.com



Wellbeing for Ditcham Seniors

We hope that your child will thrive during their time with us, and leave with skills and strengths which allow them to navigate purposeful, healthy lives. We also recognise that adolescence – particularly adolescence in the C21st – brings challenges which at times require additional support.

If you or your child have concerns or wish to talk to someone, please do contact a member of school staff and we will do our best to help.

In the case that a concern is not resolvable by the tutor teams, our wellbeing team is available to support your child.

Wellbeing Lead

Mrs Louise Salero will join our team as our senior wellbeing lead. She will be in school Tuesday (morning), Wednesday and Thursday each week, and will be available to support any pupil experiencing challenges with longer-term or more complex emotional needs.

Senior pupils are able to self-refer if they would like to see Mrs Salero. Likewise, parents and school staff can request a pupil meets with her if the need arises.

Mrs Salero's email address is louise.salero@ditchampark.com

Wellbeing Support

Mrs Nellist is our wellbeing support for senior pupils. As a full-time member of teaching staff, she is available for pupils in the Wellbeing Hub at the start of each school day (between 8.40-8.55) as well as by arrangement at other points during the week.

Mrs Nellist's email address is: michelle.nellist@ditchampark.com

Miss Senior (Head of Seniors) and **Mr Howard** (Deputy Head of Seniors – Pastoral) both work closely with pupils, parents, the DSL and wellbeing team.

Miss Senior's email address is: kate.senior@ditchampark.com

Mr Howard's email address is: richard.howard@ditchampark.com

We understand the importance of collaborative problem-solving and recognise that the most effective way of supporting our pupils' wellbeing is to work closely with all those involved in their care.

If you have any concerns about your child's welfare, please do contact us and we will do our best to help.

The Wellbeing Hub

From September 2025, any senior pupil will be able to access our Wellbeing Hub which is situated in the old senior library. This will be staffed from 8.40-3.45 each day.

During break and lunchtimes, the Wellbeing Hub will be available to any pupils who would like a quieter space to spend these times. A member of our pastoral or wellbeing teams will be present to supervise.



Expectations of Behaviour for Senior Pupils

We understand that all behaviour is communication, that our pupils need to be regulated before they can engage with their learning, and that more challenging behaviour usually indicates that requests and expectations may have, in that moment, surpassed a pupil's ability to respond adaptively.

Our approach to managing behaviour is reflective of the need to *regulate*, *relate* and then *reason,* in line with a neuro-sequential model.

We actively address and teach pupils to recognise behaviours that are positive for their well-being as part of their PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) and RSE (Relationships and Sex Education) lessons, as well as during pastoral work done in tutor times.

Our expectations of behaviour aim to:

Promote British Values: We work to instil in our pupils an understanding of British Values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs. These values are the foundation of our community and underpin all aspects of school life.

Create a Positive Learning Environment: We are dedicated to maintaining a friendly, safe, and engaging environment that stimulates and encourages learning, personal growth, and academic progress. Every member of our school community plays a role in contributing to this positive atmosphere.

Build Resilience and Good Character: We seek to empower our pupils to make a positive contribution to society and to enjoy life. By appreciating the good and building resilience, we help them manage disappointments, develop empathy, and grow into responsible, empathetic individuals.

Set High Standards: We work in partnership with our pupils to set and achieve high standards of behaviour and conduct. We expect our pupils to apply these high standards to all aspects of their lives, both within and beyond the school community.

We expect all pupils to take responsibility for their behaviour and conduct, adhering to the following principles:

Kindness, Respect, and Tolerance: Pupils are expected to display kindness, respect, and tolerance towards all members of the school community, including visitors. Discrimination or harm, whether physical or emotional, is not acceptable behaviour, either in person or online and will not be tolerated by the school.

Consideration and Care: Pupils should be considerate towards others, demonstrating care for others' work and property. They should be supportive of one another, embrace diversity, and actively listen to their peers.

Respect for Authority: Pupils should follow instructions given by adults in the school, recognising the importance of respect and cooperation within a learning environment.

Classroom Behaviour: Within teaching rooms, pupils should maintain appropriate volume levels during conversations, be silent when required, work to the best of their ability, and ensure their behaviour contributes to a safe and productive learning environment.

Safety and Sensibility: Pupils must move around the school and its grounds safely and sensibly, taking care of the school building, grounds, and the environment beyond.

Uniform: Pupils should dress according to our school uniform policy and wear it with pride.

The 4 Ps:

Our senior school rules reflect the expectations above and our consistent approach to behaviour.

We expect that all pupils demonstrate ***respect*** for:

- the ***people*** in our community
- the ***place*** in which we learn and work
- the ***purpose*** of our time together
- themselves and their ***potential*.**



Rewards and Sanctions

Recognising the good:

We acknowledge and appreciate the dedication of our learners, whether it's within the classroom or beyond. While we have various means of acknowledging exceptional achievements (detailed below) our staff firmly believe in the power of individual, heartfelt words of praise.

We firmly subscribe to the belief that the way praise is given holds more significance than the size of the reward.

The significance of praise in fostering a positive classroom atmosphere cannot be overstated. It serves as the linchpin for cultivating constructive relationships, especially with those learners who may experience greater challenges.

When your child succeeds, they may receive:

- a headteacher's award
- achievement points (logged on Satchel:One)
- an email, letter or phone call home.

If things go wrong:

Some learners may need time to reflect upon their behaviour, or time to complete work, in a detention. Detentions will be set with due care and consideration, taking individual needs into account.

Detentions are recorded on Satchel:One. If your child is set a detention, you will be notified of this. The reason for the sanction will be explained as part of this notification. For minor behaviour concerns, a 15 or 30 minute lunchtime detention will be issued. For more serious concerns, after-school detentions or – in extreme cases – exclusions will be applied.

For further information relating to behaviour management, including serious breaches of behaviour, please see our behaviour policy.

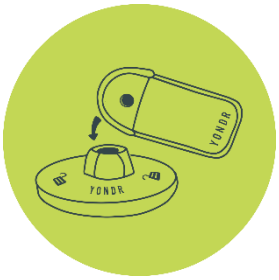
Safeguarding Considerations

Staff will always consider the context and motive of a pupil's behaviour and consider whether it raises any concerns for the welfare of the pupil or other pupils in the

community. If staff reasonably suspect that a pupil may be suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, whether inside or outside of school, they will follow the procedures set out in the school's Safeguarding / Child Protection Policies and discuss their concerns with the school's designated safeguarding leads (DSLs), without delay.

The school will also consider whether 'ny disruptive behaviour might be the result of unmet educational needs, or any other needs, and will discuss concerns with the pupil's parents accordingly.

Mobile Phone Policy



The rationale:

Smartphones are the ultimate addictive distraction. Attached to our phones, we cannot be truly present.

There is significant current research to suggest that young people today are less healthy and less happy than generations who came before them. While this is a complex problem with multiple causes, it is increasingly clear that over-exposure to virtual worlds, social media and 24/7 access to a portable internet, is damaging the health of our young people.

During the school day – and when in our care – we want our pupils to be able to connect with their peers and teachers. We want them to engage with their learning. Most significantly, we want them to be free of the pressures associated with lives led online.

The Yondr Pouch:

All senior pupils who bring a mobile phone to school will need to store this inside a Yondr pouch during the school day. Yondr pouches can be purchased from the Ditcham online shop.

If a pouch is damaged or lost, you will need to buy a replacement pouch for your child's phone.

Before entering school, pupils should put their phone inside their Yondr pouch. The pouch should then be locked and in your child's school bag until they leave the school site. (Exceptions to this are school trips. Please see below for information about off-site school activities.)

In exceptional circumstances – and under the instruction of staff – pupils will be able to access their phones during the school day. At all other times, including 'breakfast' and after-school clubs, phones should be locked in Yondr pouches.

When leaving the school site, pupils will be able to unlock their pouches using the Yondr unlocking bases situated at the senior entrance and the carpark where the buses drop-off/pick-up.

For more information about how Yondr works, please visit the link below:

https://www.overyondr.com

Trips (Day / Residential):

Your child will have the opportunity to experience a wide range of trips and off-site activities. In order that they are able to fully engage with these experiences, we expect pupils to either leave their phones at home or to keep them locked in their Yondr pouches.

Staff leading the trip will have a mobile Yondr unlocking base which can be accessed if necessary. Staff will have a trips' phone and parents will be given this number in order that, in case of emergency, they are able to contact their child.

Any trip-specific phone information will be communicated to you via trip letters.

Smartwatches:

We encourage pupils to wear watches as doing so can help develop essential organisational skills! However, we do not allow smartwatches in the senior school for reasons stated above.

Headphones:

All pupils should have a set of headphones as part of their everyday equipment. However, these should only be used under the direction of staff and should never be worn around the school site.



Heads of Departments and Teaching Staff

Please see below for a list of all our academic departments and teaching teams.

Art

- Head of Department: Mrs H. Drake, helen.drake@ditchampark.com

Business

- Head of Department: Mr R. Howard, richard.howard@ditchampark.com
- Miss O. Bicknell, olivia.bicknell@ditchampark.com

Computing

- Head of Department: Mr T. Batchelor, tom.batchelor@ditchampark.com

Design & Technology

- Head of Department: Mr J. Hoad, james.hoad@ditchampark.com
- Mrs H. Drake, helen.drake@ditchampark.com

Drama

- Head of Department: Mrs H. Baker, heather.baker@ditchampark.com

English

- Head of Department: Mrs K. Roberts, karren.roberts@ditchampark.com
- 2nd in department: Miss K. Snow, katy.snow@ditchampark.com
- Mr M. Lyons, mike.lyons@ditchampark.com
- Miss O. Bicknell, olivia.bicknell@ditchampark.com
- Mrs J. Browning, jane.browning@ditchampark.com
- Ms K. Senior, kate.senior@ditchampark.com

Geography

- Head of Department: Mrs R. Turner, rose.turner@ditchampark.com

History

- Head of Department: Mr G. Harris, george.harris@ditchampark.com

Latin

- Head of Department: Miss O. Bicknell, olivia.bicknell@ditchampark.com

Maths

- Head of Department: Mrs S. Whittle, sarah.whittle@ditchampark.com
- 2nd in department: Mrs Y. Morris, yvonne.morris@ditchampark.com
- Mrs M. Nellist, michelle.nellist@ditchampark.com
- Mr R. Howard, richard.howard@ditchampark.com

Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)

- Head of Department: Mr P. Swabey, peter.swabey@ditchampark.com
- Mrs S. Almeida-Fields, sofia.almeida-field@ditchampark.com

Music

- Head of Department: Mr E. Williamson, ed.williamson@ditchampark.com

PE

- Head of Department: Mr J. Walton, james.walton@ditchampark.com
- 2nd in department: Mrs S. Cartwright, sonia.cartwright@ditchampark.com
- Miss G. Brown, georgie.brown@ditchampark.com
- Mr M. Sebastian-Todd, max.sebastian-todd@ditchampark.com

PSHE

- Head of Department: Mrs J. Browning, jane.browning@ditchampark.com
- Mrs S. Almeida-Field, sofia.almeidafield@ditchampark.com
- Mrs M. Nellist, michelle.nellist@ditchampark.com
- Mr D. Leonard, dan.leonard@ditchampark.com

- Mr G. Harris, george.harris@ditchampark.com
- Mrs R. Turner, rose.turner@ditchampark.com

Religious Studies (RS)

- Head of Department: Mrs J. Browning, jane.browning@ditchampark.com

Science

- Head of Department: Mr J. Hoad, james.hoad@ditchampark.com
- 2nd in Department: Mr D. Leonard, dan.leonard@ditchampark.com
- Mrs S. Boyland, stacey.boyland@ditchampark.com
- Mrs B. Kelly, belinda.kelly@ditchampark.com
- Mrs L. Hoad, laura.hoad@ditchampark.com
- Mrs L. Surgeon, lana.surgeon@ditchampark.com



Progress Assessments and Exams

Progress Assessments, Years 7-10:

Throughout the school year, subject teachers will informally assess and monitor the progress of your child. Additionally, all pupils in years 7–10 will complete progress tasks towards the end of both autumn and spring terms.

During the summer term, all pupils in years 7–10 will complete a summer assessment series.

Summer Assessments, Years 7&8:

For pupils in years 7 and 8, summer assessments are typically 48 minutes long with additional time for those pupils with Access Arrangements. The assessment series will take place in the week beginning **Monday 11th May 2026**.

During the assessment week, Key Stage 3 pupils will only sit formal assessments in the following subjects: English, maths, science and MFL.

Teachers will provide pupils with their results and feedback during lessons following the end of the series. Results of these assessments will be formally shared with parents in the final written report of the year.

Summer Assessments, Years 9&10:

For pupils in years 9 and 10, assessments are generally modelled on previous GCSE papers. Exams therefore demand more time and can last as long as 2 hours and 15 minutes. Additional time for those with Access Arrangements – generally calculated at 25% - would extend this further.

The summer assessments for year 9 and 10 pupils will take place in the **first two weeks after the summer half-term break**, this year scheduled for the week beginning **Monday 1st June 2026**.

Teachers will provide pupils with their results and feedback during lessons following the end of the series. Results of these assessments will be formally shared with parents in the final written report of the year.

Year 11 and the Mock Examination Series

In order that they have had an opportunity to practise sitting the complete series of exams, all year 11 pupils will sit **mock examinations** at the end of the autumn term. This year, mocks will take place over **three weeks commencing Monday 24th November.**

In line with the summer GCSE series, pupils will generally sit two assessments each day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. During the middle part of the day, pupils who remain in school will attend their timetabled period 3 and period 4 lessons. At these times, they will be able to complete supervised study for upcoming exams.

During the mock period, pupils are permitted to study at home and only attend school to sit their assessments. If however, your child would rather attend school as normal, we will supervise them throughout the day.

Following the end of the mock series, teachers will begin to share results and feedback with pupils. These results will be formally shared with parents by way of a written report which will be issued in late January.

GCSE summer series, 2026:

Your child's GCSE exams are provisionally scheduled to start from Friday 8th May. This would mean that year 11 pupils' **last official day in school would be Thursday 7th May**. After this date, they will begin formal study leave and will only attend school to sit their GCSE assessments.

We recognise that some pupils may find it difficult to work independently at home and would benefit from continued attendance in school.

If your child would like to study at school, this will be possible. They should attend their timetabled lessons where they will be able to study independently under supervision.



Homework in Seniors

The issue of homework is a thorny and often controversial one!

Whilst schools are not legally mandated to set homework, most do. Certainly, as pupils move through secondary school and begin GCSE courses, it is essential that independent, meaningful work takes place at home to support and reinforce the learning happening in school.

Homework should receive teacher feedback in some form. This might be a written comment but could just as likely be verbal feedback in the context of a lesson where a homework task is set in order to ensure that pupils have the knowledge they require to tackle the next lesson's learning.

Homework should never be set without purpose and should be integral to learning. Beyond the chance to practise and reinforce what is learned in class, it is also an opportunity to develop skills of independent study, application and perseverance.

We will aim to be mindful of the need for pupils to complete some work 'off-screen' and will set a range of tasks which support various learning preferences and encourage critical, creative and problem-solving skills.

Below, is a guide to how homework is set for DPS seniors.

How much time should be spent doing homework?

Particularly in the younger years (7 and 8), we recognise that, after a day at school, children should be active and spending time with friends and family. We therefore aim to avoid excessive time spent on homework.

As a guide, pupils can expect the following:

Years 7&8:

- On average, pupils should spend no more than one hour per night completing homework

Years 9&10:

- On average, pupils should spend 1.5 hours per night completing homework

Year 11:

- In order to meet the demands of the GCSE year, pupils in year 11 should expect to spend between 1.5 – 2 hours per night on homework/revision. Over the course of a week, they should complete at least 1 hour of independent work per GCSE subject.

'Core' subjects:

At Key Stage 3, 'core' subjects include: English, maths, science and MFL.

At Key Stage 3 (years 7&8), core subject teachers will set either a single, 'longer' piece of homework once each week, or two 'shorter' pieces. At KS 4 (years 9-11) this frequency and volume will increase in order to meet the demands of the GCSE courses.

'Options' subjects:

The options subjects comprise those which pupils can opt **not** to study at GCSE. These are: humanities (ie: history, geography, RS); drama; music; PE; D&T; art; computer science; business, French, Spanish and Latin.

At Key Stage 3 (years 7&8), options subject teachers will set a piece of homework once every two weeks. Each piece will be expected to take approximately 30 minutes. At KS 4 (years 9-11) this frequency will likely increase in order to meet the demands of the GCSE courses.

Homework and Revision in Year 11:

At certain times of the year – November/December and from March onwards – 'homework' for year 11 pupils will be officially replaced by revision for GCSEs. Pupils will be given guidance on the various ways they can effectively revise.

Meeting the needs of different pupils:

We recognise that our pupils work in different ways and at different rates. Some pupils will effectively complete a task much more quickly than others.

Your child's teachers will get to know them and be able to adapt expectations to meet need. For example, in some cases, a teacher may well not expect that a task is 'completed', only that the appropriate amount of time and effort are given to the work.

Homework should reflect pupils' efforts and capabilities. Work that is not completed to the appropriate standard will be re-set.

Stretch and Challenge Homework Tasks:

Often, ‘open-ended’ tasks are the most effective way to ensure stretch and challenge for more confident/able pupils or those with particular interests in certain areas. This should not equate to more work being done or more time spent on homework. Rather, the open-ended task may well avoid having a ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer, instead encouraging multiple responses and methods of problem-solving.

Parental involvement:

As with all other aspects of a child’s schooling, positive parental engagement is helpful as our young people learn to navigate their way from dependence to greater autonomy.

Teachers will put all homework tasks on Show My Homework. You and your child will have log-ins and so should be able to access the work set.

In general, if your home set-up allows, we would advise a communal space as the most useful for the completion of homework. While your child’s bedroom may offer a quieter space, it is too easy for them to be distracted by the lure of various tech and consequently to find focusing on homework tasks, increasingly challenging! Having a **phone-free space** is also helpful for ensuring that time spent on any homework task is as productive as possible.



Feedback & Marking

The importance of quality feedback and marking cannot be over-stated. It has a significant effect on how pupils feel about the work they produce, and on outcomes in terms of pupil progress.

Research and experience tell us that the best, most useful feedback focuses on specific, clear responses to the pupil's work, rather than generalised remarks or the issuing of grades. Typically, where a traditional 'grade' is recorded on a piece of work, the pupil ignores the important part of the feedback, ie: the comment which provides information about how progress can be made.

All feedback – whether written or otherwise – needs to be framed in such a way that it is clear to your child what their learning gaps are and how they can close these gaps before progressing to 'new' learning.

Where teacher feedback is written, pupils will be given sufficient and dedicated time to reflect, respond and react to this. Verbal feedback will often be used by teachers to provide timely responses to work in progress.

Feedback is a two-way dialogue between pupil and teacher, and will take various forms.

We aim to ensure that F&M of learners' work is: **manageable**, **meaningful** and **motivating**.

- **manageable:** marking should proportionate – staff need to consider the frequency and complexity of written feedback, as well as the time-effectiveness of marking in relation to planning and teaching lessons.

- **meaningful:** feedback and marking will look different depending on: the age of the learners; the subject taught; the specific piece of work; and individual learner needs. Teachers are encouraged to adjust their approach as necessary and to incorporate outcomes into subsequent planning and teaching.

- **motivating:** marking should recognise and value success while motivating pupils to make progress. This does not mean writing in-depth comments or being universally positive: often short, challenging comments or verbal feedback are more effective. If the teacher is doing more work than pupils, this can become a disincentive for pupils to accept challenges and take responsibility for improving their work thereby reducing long-term retention and resilience-building.

What does feedback and marking look like?

The list below provides a range of practices currently used by senior teaching staff at DPS to provide effective feedback to learners. This list is not exhaustive and is regularly adapted and updated. F&M might involve:

- immediate verbal or written feedback – teacher provides in-class feedback and pupils re-work as appropriate
- self, peer and group F&M
- use of Google classroom to provide F&M
- comprehensive written feedback of work – pupils given time to read, reflect and respond
- verbal feedback
- whole-class feedback
- collaborative target setting
- use of stamps and stickers
- WWW/EBI – used mostly for written work
- reflection sheets/records – evaluating end of topic tests, mock exams etc
- summative assessments and feedback
- spotlighting of work – use of students' work as modelling tool
- use of assessment criteria to enable pupils to compare their work
- group discussion of work.

Understanding Subject Report Grade Descriptors

Achievement Grades:

It is important to note that the 'achievement' grades given by your child's teachers will reflect your child's **projected attainment** at GCSE, assuming that their current rate of progress continues. The achievement grade is **not a current level of attainment**.

Achievement grades are based on a range of factors including performance in assessments and the professional judgements of your child's teachers based on class and homework produced by your child.

Years 7 and 8:

For each subject studied, your child will be given one of four progress indicators as follows:

- 3 – 5 (current attainment indicates progress towards a GCSE Grade 3 – 5)
- 4 – 6 (current attainment indicates progress towards a GCSE Grade 4 – 6)
- 5 – 7 (current attainment indicates progress towards a GCSE Grade 5 – 7)
- 8 – 9 (current attainment indicates progress towards a GCSE Grade 8 – 9)

Year 9:

In year 9, your child will begin their GCSE studies. On the progress reports, teachers will provide a three-grade 'band' which represents your child's most likely range of **projected** GCSE attainment, e.g. 5-7.

Year 10:

As your child moves through their GCSE 'journey' and completes more work, teachers are more realistically able to 'narrow' the projected attainment bands. In year 10, your child's teachers will provide a two-grade band which represents the most likely range of **projected** GCSE attainment, e.g. 5-6.

Year 11:

Until pupils have covered sufficient GCSE content and are regularly completing GCSE level work in exam conditions, it is unrealistic for teachers to **predict** single grades with any confidence. Even in year 11, the 'prediction' of a pupil's grades is an in-exact science. Ultimately, the outcome is determined by the work produced 'on the day,' in the exam hall, and by GCSE exam boards who only set the grade boundaries *after* pupils have sat the exams.

However, in Year 11, your child's teachers will record single grades (rather than the previous banded grades) which will reflect what they believe will be your child's most likely GCSE result in each subject.

Effort Grades for Senior Pupils:

Teachers' assessment of a pupil's behaviour, engagement, productivity and motivation in lessons will generate your child's effort grade on their progress report. Please see below for a descriptor of each grade.

A*	Outstanding
A	Very Good
B	Good
C	Satisfactory
D	Concern

A*. Your child's effort is outstanding. They are working extremely hard, completing tasks set to the best possible standard, and fully involving themselves with all aspects of their learning. They are regularly able to self-motivate and work well independently, demonstrating resilience in the face of challenge. Your child listens effectively and responds to feedback given. Their behaviour is exemplary.

A. Your child's effort is consistently very good. They work hard and complete tasks set to the best possible standard, actively involving themselves with all aspects of their learning. Your child listens and responds positively to feedback. They maintain high standards of behaviour, are motivated and demonstrate determination to reach their potential.

B. Your child's effort is good. In lessons, they are working well, engaging with their learning and completing tasks set to a standard reflective of their ability. Your child listens to advice given and responds to feedback. Their behaviour for learning is positive and demonstrates motivation to learn.

C. Your child's effort is satisfactory. They complete the work required but the quality of the work is inconsistent. They are generally but not always engaged with their learning. Your child usually listens to advice but does not always act on the feedback given. In general, they are keen to do well but can lack focus and require additional teacher support to keep them on track.

D. Your child's effort is a cause for concern. Effort is inconsistent and they often struggle to sustain their involvement in learning. Work is not produced with care and does not reflect your child's ability. Often, feedback is given but not responded to. At times, your child's behaviour can be a distraction, for themselves and others. Improvement is needed to ensure that progress is made.

Homework Grades for Senior Pupils:

Teachers will assess the quality of homework produced by your child and award them a corresponding grade. Please see below for a descriptor of each grade.

A* Outstanding
A Very Good
B Good
C Satisfactory
D Concern

A*. Homework is always be completed on time and to an extremely high standard. There is evidence of your child exploring and extending the set task independently or undertaking independent study into their personal areas of interest within the subject.

A. Homework will always be completed on time and to a high standard that reflects your child's ability and willingness to work independently.

B. Homework is completed on time and to a good standard that reflects your child's ability.

C. Homework is generally handed in on time but may not be completed to a standard that appropriately reflects ability or meets the task's expectations.

D. Homework has been missed or handed in late, on two or more occasions and/or may not be completed to a standard that appropriately reflects ability or meets the task's expectations.



Stretch and Challenge in Seniors

Regardless of current levels of confidence, skill or preferred learning styles, stretch and challenge is integral to learning and teaching. Without it, there is no engagement or progress.

In our classrooms, our teaching team aims to provide *all* pupils with stretch and challenge in order that they make the best possible progress.

In order to effectively embed a culture whereby all pupils are challenged, we need to understand – and accept - that learning is difficult and requires resilience (from pupils and staff alike!)

We believe that all pupils can produce quality work, provided that they are clear about what this looks like and are equipped with the tools and support to achieve this.

What does stretch and challenge 'look like'?

Stretch and challenge is multi-faceted and will look different in different classrooms, with different learners and teachers. The list below is not exhaustive but should give you some idea of how your child can expect to be challenged in their learning.

Stretch and challenge in the classroom might involve:

- enquiry questions that anchor learning and enable pupils to direct their progress whilst remaining focused on key aims and objectives
- teachers asking metacognitive questions: eg, 'How does this task develop our skills and build on prior knowledge?' / 'What questions do we need to ask next in order to take our thinking further still?'
- pupils being asked challenging questions without obvious answers

- pupils posing their own questions and considering which questions are most effective at generating sophisticated discussion / learning

- the expectation that all pupils will think deeply and contribute to the learning

- explicit modelling (by teachers) of critical thinking and problem-solving process

- use of academic and technical vocabulary modelled and expected in lessons – explicit teaching of this in order that pupils learn to express their knowledge using the appropriate technical vocabulary of various disciplines

- teachers not accepting first responses but encouraging pupils to develop concise, precise responses to questions posed

- teachers setting tasks which promote resilience and expectation of increasing independence

- teaching pupils to consider how they might be able to help themselves / what questions they could ask, if they are temporarily 'stuck'

- teaching pupils to recognise the importance of 'failure' in learning

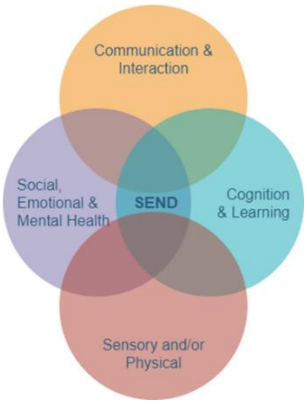
- pupils being set a homework 'Challenge Bank' featuring a range of tasks that require pupils to consolidate and master key concepts, applying their knowledge in different contexts

- pupils being set clear structures and steps/criteria for success which enable them to increasingly self-regulate and direct their progress.

Stretch and Challenge Beyond the Classroom:

We aim for our pupils to experience as wide a range of additional and enriching learning opportunities as possible. These opportunities include:

- scholarship programmes (art, music, PE, academic)
- scholars' lunches
- extension libraries
- university visits
- guest speakers/workshops/assemblies/parent experts
- bookclubs and podcast discussions
- DPS 50 Challenge



SEND for Ditcham Seniors

Ditcham currently provides additional and/or different provision for a range of needs, including: communication and interaction; Autistic Spectrum Disorder; speech and language difficulties; cognition and learning; Dyslexia; Dyspraxia; social, emotional and mental health difficulties; Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (ADHD); and sensory and/or physical needs, for example, visual impairments, hearing impairments, processing difficulties and epilepsy.

How we identify SEND and assessing for need?

We will assess each pupil's current skills and levels of attainment on entry and during the school academic year. Teachers will make regular assessments of progress for all pupils and identify those whose progress:

- is significantly less productive than that of their peers starting from the same baseline
- fails to match or better the child's previous rate of progress
- fails to close the attainment gap between the child and their peers

Teachers can request informal assessment of SEND needs by referring pupils to the Learning Support Department. The Learning Support Department will make a judgement of the needs of the child and whether they require additional support from the team.

Parents can also email the Head of Learning Support in Seniors (Mrs Hayley Brimble) if they have any concerns regarding their child with regards to SEND/Neurodivergent needs (hayley.brimble@ditchampark.com).

Pupils are also welcome to come and discuss any learning concerns they may have with a member of the team.

Learning Support lessons

Any age pupil can receive lessons from the Learning Support department. Generally, LS lessons are 30 minutes long. Please refer to the school website for cost. The LS department timetable the lessons to ensure that pupils do not miss 'core' lessons (ie: English, maths, science).

Access arrangements screening

All pupils will be screened in Year 7 to identify any areas of need, in order that the school can implement 'access arrangements' as a pupil's 'normal way of working' in as early as possible. Parents will be contacted if the screening identifies any areas of need.

Further formal testing for access arrangements will take place during Year 9. If pupils meet the JCQ guidelines for access arrangements, parents will be informed of the outcome of these assessments, or if any further assessments need to take place.

It is not necessary for parents to obtain an Educational Psychologist report or to see a specialist teacher in order to qualify a pupil for access arrangements, unless you are wishing to obtain a formal diagnosis.

Parents of children with a medical diagnosis, such as ADHD or ASD will need to provide a copy of the formal diagnosis as evidence for the arrangements that their child will need during examinations. These reports are not timed bound and can be from early childhood.

If you have any questions regarding access arrangements or LS lessons, please feel free to contact Hayley Brimble.

SEND in the classroom

Subject teachers are responsible and accountable for the progress and development of all pupils in their class.

High-quality teaching is our first step in responding to pupils who have SEND. This will be reasonably adapted for individual pupils with specific needs.

Teachers should make the following adaptations to ensure all pupils' needs are met. This might involve:

- using varied teaching methods to ensure that all pupils are able to access the curriculum; by grouping, 1:1 work, teaching style, content of the lesson, etc
- using recommended aids, such as Chromebooks, iPads, computers, coloured overlays, visual timetables, larger font, computer reading software, dictation software etc
- adapting teaching by giving longer processing times, pre-teaching of key vocabulary, reading instructions aloud, etc
- using age-appropriate support in lessons to meet the needs of the child.



A Bit About GCSEs

As a Ditcham Park senior, your child will study a three-year GCSE programme, beginning in year 9. Over the three years, pupils will follow a broad course of study, consisting of both compulsory and optional GCSE and non-GCSE subjects (ie: PE, games and PSHE).

Core Subjects at GCSE:

In all but exceptional circumstances, pupils will follow compulsory GCSE courses in: English Language, English literature, mathematics and science. Your child will either work towards a 'double' or 'triple' science award. All year 9 pupils will begin a course of study towards the three separate sciences: biology, chemistry and physics. At the end of Year 9, a decision will be made whether pupils continue to study for the triple award or work towards the combined course (equivalent to two GCSE's).

Options Subjects at GCSE:

At Ditcham Park School, we offer 13 GCSE option subjects as follows:

- Art
- Business
- Computer Science
- Design & Technology
- Drama
- French
- Geography
- History
- Latin
- Music
- PE
- RS
- Spanish

These option subjects are arranged across four 'blocks' which are created each year in such a way as to satisfy as many pupils' subject selections as possible.

For the 25/26 academic year, the option blocks for each year are set out below.

Year 9			
Business	Design & Technology	Business	Art
Computer Science	Latin	History	Design &Technology
Drama	PE	Music	Drama
French	Spanish	PE	Geography
		Religious Studies	

Year 10			
Computer Science	Business	Design & Technology	Art
Geography	Latin	Drama	Business
PE	PE	French	Design & Technology
Religious Studies	Drama	Spanish	Music
	History		

Year 11			
Art	Business	Art	Drama
Computer Science	Music	Business	Geography
French	PE	Design & Technology	Latin
PE	Religious Studies	History	Spanish
		Spanish	

Detailed information about our GCSE programme and subject information – including ‘core’ subject information - can be found in the GCSE Options’ Booklet which is available for download from our website.



Communication Between Home and School

We recognise that, in order to give pupils the best chance of success, effective, positive communication between home and school is essential.

Formal communication between school and home will include:

- *Welcome to the Year* events
- annual curriculum parent consultation evenings
- half-termly grade sheets
- twice yearly written subject reports
- termly pastoral tutor 'check-ins'
- half-termly parent 'Connect' mornings
- a parents' weekly bulletin

Welcome to the Year Events

Parents of pupils in all senior years are invited to information evenings at the start of the new academic year. The Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Year will share key information about the year ahead. There will also be the opportunity to meet your child's tutor and socialise with other parents in the year group. The dates of these *Welcome* events are as follows:

- Year 7: Wednesday 3rd September, 6.00-8.30pm
- Year 8: Thursday 4th September, 6.00-7.30pm
- Year 9: Thursday 4th September, 6.00-7.30pm
- Year 10 Thursday 4th September, 6.00-7.30pm
- Year 11: Tuesday 9th September, 6.00-7.00pm (Careers' Fayre will follow this)

Curriculum Parent Consultation Evenings

In addition to the informal communication parents will have with tutors and teachers throughout the year, our report and parent evening schedules are key points at which you will be provided with comprehensive information about your child's academic progress.

Below is a detailed schedule of **parent evening dates** for the 2025/26 academic year.

Year 7

- Year 7AB: Tuesday 2nd December, 5.15-7.30pm
- Year 7CD: Thursday 4th December, 5.15-7.30pm

Year 8

- Year 8AB: Tuesday 10th February, 5.15-7.30pm
- Year 8CD: Thursday 12th February, 5.15-7.30pm

As part of the **GCSE year 8 options' process**, there will also be an options' information evening and fayre on Thursday 12th March 2026 between 6.00-8.00pm.

Year 9

- Parents of year 9 pupils will meet their child's 'core' subject teachers on Tuesday 9th December, 5.15 – 7.45pm
- Parents of year 9 pupils will meet their child's 'options' subject teachers on Thursday 11th, 5.15 – 7.45pm

Year 10

- Parents of year 10 pupils will meet their child's 'core' subject teachers on Tuesday 24th February, 5.15 – 7.45pm
- Parents of year 10 pupils will meet their child's 'options' subject teachers on Thursday 26th February, 5.15 – 7.45pm

Year 11

- Parents of year 11 pupils will meet their child's 'core' subject teachers on Tuesday 4th November, 5.15 – 7.45pm
- Parents of year 11 pupils will meet their child's 'options' subject teachers on Thursday 6th November, 5.15 – 7.45pm

Booking information about each event will be sent to parents several weeks before the scheduled parents' evening. All appointments – except the year 8 options' evening - will be for online appointments which should be booked through the School Cloud system.

If you have any questions about any parents' evenings, please contact Mr Howard: richard.howard@ditchampark.com

Half-term Grades and Reports for Senior Pupils

Pupils in years 7–10 will receive two written reports each year: a mid-year report and an end-of-year report. In addition, at the end of each half term, pupils will receive a set of grades which reflect their current effort and attainment. These reports will have three elements:

- an achievement grade
- an effort grade
- a homework grade.

For comprehensive detail about grade descriptors used in our reports, please see pages 21-23.

Year 11 pupils will receive tailored reports giving you comprehensive information about performance in the mock examinations and a personalised revision list.

Pastoral Tutor-Check-ins:

Parents of all senior pupils will have the opportunity to check-in with their child's tutor each term. The purpose of these online check-ins will be to discuss your child's wellbeing and pastoral progress.

The dates of the tutor check-ins will be as follows:

- Wednesday 17th September, 4.15-5.30pm
- Wednesday 28th January, 4.15-5.30pm
- Wednesday 29th April, 4.15-5.30pm

Booking information about each event will be sent to parents several weeks before the scheduled date. All appointments will be for online appointments which should be booked through the School Cloud system.

Parent 'Connect' Events:

The purpose of our 'Connect' events is to provide a forum for exploration of and discussion about a range of relevant pastoral and academic themes. Details of individual *Connect* events will be shared with you via the senior bulletin.

- Friday 12th September, 9.00-10.00am
- Friday 14th November, 9.00-10.00am
- Friday 23rd January '26, 9.00-10.00am
- Friday 6th March, 9.00-10.00am
- Friday 8th May, 9.00-10.00am
- Friday 12th June, 9.00-10.00am

Weekly Bulletin:

To help with your planning, the weekly *Senior Bulletin* will include an overview of the week ahead, outlining key senior events, trips, fixtures and notices.

Contacting Us and Who to Contact:

Should you wish to contact individual members of staff, email is generally the most effective way to do this. We will always aim to get back to you as soon as we can, and certainly within 48 working hours.

We value strong working relationships with parents of our pupils and thank the many of you who work positively with us. We would ask that – in all communication – parents behave with respect and kindness towards staff. Our team works extremely hard in the interests of your children. Please work with us to model the behaviour we want to see our young people.

Schools are busy places! The information below should provide guidance regarding which staff to contact in the event that you need to do so. If you direct your communication to the relevant staff, this will enable us to more quickly and effectively resolve any issues that arise.

Pastoral Issues

Most pastoral issues should in the first instance be directed to your child's tutor who will be best-placed to help. (S)he will see your child at the start of each school day and will be on-hand to offer support and guidance as needed.

In the event that a tutor is unable to resolve an issue, please contact your child's Head of Year. They will liaise with relevant staff as appropriate and provide an additional layer of pastoral support.

Where concerns persist or are more complex in nature, please contact Mr Howard or Miss Senior.

In the event that a concern remains unresolved, please contact Mr Spawforth as per the process detailed in our concerns/complaints procedure.

Safeguarding Issues

In the event of a concern you have about the safety – physical or otherwise – of a child or young person in seniors, please immediately contact one of our Designated Safeguarding Team (DSLs). These are: Miss Senior (DDSL), Mr Howard (DDSL), Mrs Salero (DDSL) and Mrs Probert (Head of Juniors/DSL)

Academic Issues

Most academic questions or concerns should be directed to your child's subject teacher who will be working closely with your son/daughter and be best-placed to help resolve an issue.

In the event that an issue is not resolvable by your child's teacher, please contact the relevant Head of Department.

Depending on the nature of the issue, it might be useful to involve your child's Head of Year. They will liaise with relevant staff as appropriate and provide an additional layer of support.

Where concerns persist or are more complex in nature, please contact Mrs Hoad or Miss Senior.

In the event that a concern remains unresolved, please contact Mr Spawforth as per the process detailed in our concerns/complaints procedure.

Parent Whatsapp Groups:

We appreciate that these groups can be a useful way of communicating. We would however, ask you to be mindful of how they are used. If you have a question, concern or complaint, please do follow the appropriate channels and contact the school directly. At times, mis-information is shared via the Whatsapp groups and this can cause confusion and upset.

The Good News:

Finally, it is always lovely to hear about the positive things your child is up to outside of school. Please do keep in touch and let us know about the good, as well as the more challenging, aspects of life!



Co-Curricular Opportunities for Ditcham Seniors

Throughout their time at school, we would encourage your child to become involved with a wide range of co-curricular activities. These activities provide pupils with the chance to engage with peers from all year groups, to develop new interests and be fully involved with the wider school community. The information below will give you detail of some of our co-curricular provision. For a full list of all activities on offer, please see the Co-Curricular handbook or contact the relevant staff members.



Music, Art and Drama:

In addition to enabling pupils to acquire skills they will use throughout their lives, the performing arts are vital for helping young people build confidence, community, creativity and self-esteem. Music, art and drama are integral parts of the co-curricular provision on offer for Ditcham seniors.

Our aspiring artists and performers are encouraged to get involved with a wide range of activities including:

- various choirs
- instrumental ensembles
- a wide range of individual music lessons taught by specialist musicians
- concerts
- LAMDA
- school productions
- student bands
- Battle of the Bands
- art clubs



Sport:

As your child progresses through the senior school, there are many opportunities for them to learn and play a variety of sports.

All pupils in years 7 and 8 have a timetabled games session each week. For 2025/2026 this is scheduled for Wednesday afternoon. Most of the weekly fixtures will coincide with this scheduled lesson. This is so that your child can be involved with fixtures without it impacting on other timetabled lessons. Boys will play football fixtures through the autumn term, rugby fixtures through the spring term and cricket, athletics and tennis through the summer. Girls will play football, netball and hockey fixtures through the autumn and spring terms before moving to cricket, athletics and tennis in the summer.

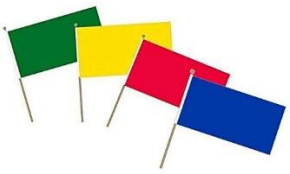
All pupils in years 9 and 10 also have a timetabled games session each week. For 2025/2026 this is scheduled for Tuesday afternoons. Again, the majority of their weekly fixtures will coincide with this scheduled lesson, so your child can be involved with fixtures without it impacting on their GCSE lessons. Boys will play football fixtures through the autumn term, rugby fixtures through the spring term and cricket, athletics and tennis through the summer. Girls will play football, netball and hockey fixtures through the autumn and spring terms before moving into cricket, athletics and tennis in the summer.

In addition, there are a large number of running and cross-country events held throughout the year. Where pupil interest and numbers permit, other fixtures including basketball and volleyball will also take place.

With the focus on GCSE’s, our Year 11 pupils play slightly fewer fixtures but should still be involved with the fixture programme.

Other sporting opportunities include: an active mountain bike club with afternoon training sessions on our school trail, and longer rides on weekends; the Ditcham Tennis Academy which provides an exciting opportunity for your child to receive year-round, expert tuition from a qualified LTA tennis coach: judo, dance, golf and fencing clubs.

For full details of all the co-curricular activities on offer, please see our Clubs and Activities booklet.



The Senior House System:

Run by our 4 Heads of Houses, the house system offers pupils the chance to engage in friendly competition across a wide range of creative, academic and sporting activities. House encourages interaction between peers from different year groups, forging connections which might not typically occur. Most importantly, participation cultivates a sense of belonging and investment in our school and wider communities.

Each of the houses selects a charity to support for the year. Throughout the year and during Charities' Week, pupils have a wide range of opportunities to fundraise for their chosen charity.

All pupils will participate in house activities. We aim to include a wide range of activities in order to appeal to as many pupils as possible. Quizzes, drama-based events and house assemblies are among the activities supported by pupils and staff as part of the House programme.



Pupil Voice – Senior Council:

Led by two of our year 11 prefects, the Senior Council is the ideal forum for pupils to have a voice and opportunity to impact the running of the school.

The council meets twice each half-term to discuss a wide range of school-related issues. They are encouraged to be proactive and to bring ideas to the table. They also have responsibility to canvas student opinion and provide pupils' responses to current issues, as well as to consider future plans.

Pupil council leaders meet with staff, including the senior leadership team each term, to communicate the views of the council and wider student body.



Eco Council:

The pupil eco-council is a whole-school venture, offering our young people the chance to work with peers from across the school and to consider how to promote attitudes and behaviours which encourage everyone in the school community to better protect the environment around them. Supported by Mrs Hoad and Mrs Somerville, the council is active and influential and has just been awarded a 'Green Flag' at distinction level, for the third year running.

Co-Curricular Contacts:

- For more information about opportunities within music, including peripatetic lessons, please contact Mr Williamson (ed.williamson@ditchampark.com)
- For information about LAMDA, please contact Jenny De Jongh (jenny.dejongh@ditchampark.com)
- For more information about opportunities within Drama, including school productions, please contact Mrs Baker (heather.baker@dictahmpark.com)
- For more information about opportunities within art, please contact Mrs Drake (helen.drake@ditchampark.com)
- For more information about opportunities within sport and PE, please contact Mr Walton (james.walton@ditchampark.com)
- For more information about the pupil council, please contact Miss Senior (kate.senior@ditchampark.com)
- For more information about the eco council, please contact Mrs Hoad (laura.hoad@ditchampark.com)

Seniors' Uniform: Girls

Senior Girls' Uniform:

- Ditcham blazer
- Ditcham jumper (optional)
- Ditcham kilt
- white long sleeved revere collar blouse (tucked in!)
- black tights or white socks
- black shoes (which take polish)

Senior Girls' PE Kit:

- Ditcham polar fleece
- Ditcham tracksuit bottoms
- Ditcham sports top
- Ditcham skort
- Ditcham games socks
- short white socks
- black base layer top & bottoms (optional)
- trainers
- shin pads
- gumshield
- boots
- holdall – any colour

Seniors' Uniform: Boys

Senior Boys' Uniform:

- Ditcham blazer
- Ditcham jumper (optional)
- charcoal grey trousers
- white long-sleeved shirt (winter)
- white short-sleeved shirt (summer)
- Ditcham tie
- grey socks
- black shoes (which take polish)

Senior Boys' PE Kit:

- Ditcham polar fleece
- Ditcham tracksuit bottoms
- Ditcham sports top
- Ditcham games top
- Ditcham PE shorts
- Ditcham games socks
- short white socks
- black base layer top & bottoms (optional)
- trainers
- shin pads
- gumshield
- boots
- holdall – any colour



Additional Equipment, Lockers and Cubbies

All pupils in seniors will be issued with a cubby-hole and locker.

The cubby-hole will be for storage of your child's book bags, coats and lunch boxes.

In addition, your child will have a locker situated in the PE department. This is specifically for the storage of PE kit bags and their school uniform during PE lessons. To avoid loss of property, it is important that pupils do not leave any possessions in the PE changing rooms at any time.

Mr Howard will manage of distribution of cubbies and lockers. Any questions or issues, please contact him.

Additional Equipment:

Your child should start the school year with the following:

- a Chromebook (purchase via the online shop)
- Yondr pouch (purchase via online shop)*
- a well-stocked pencil case
- black handwriting pens
- HB pencils
- a ruler
- coloured pens/pencils
- a selection of highlighters
- a mathematical calculator – Casio FX-83GTCW
- a protractor
- a pair of compasses
- a set of wired headphones – *not Airpods* - for use in lessons
- a water bottle

* only necessary if pupil is bringing mobile phone to school