



Dear Parents & Carers,

We are nearing the end of term, and I wanted to offer an overview of staffing changes for 2024-25 and to offer additional guidance so that all families can enjoy the summer and prepare fully for September 2024. Part of that preparation involves having a clear understanding of our expectations for students in relation to purchasing the correct uniform, staying safe, behaving appropriately, and being prepared to learn and contribute positively to the school community in the year ahead. We are committed to clear communication on a regular basis so that all members of our school community understand why we have high expectations and how they can support the school to deliver a high-quality education for each child.

We are very proud of our students' achievements in 2023-24 and thrilled that so many have accessed new opportunities again this year. We have hosted 10 Parent Information Evenings in school, have offered 39 detailed 'Friday Bulletin' updates and have hosted a full programme of music, sport, and extra-curricular activities that hundreds of students have accessed and enjoyed. Our students have achieved success in a wide range of different fields, and we are proud of each of them. We have celebrated their success in our end of year assemblies and have rewarded their effort and achievements across the year. We have also rewarded them for their commitment to social justice and public service and for taking important steps in their personal development, regardless of their individual starting points. It has been a good year, and the school is in a very strong position.

There have been several staffing changes for September 2024 that we would also like to share with you:

Staffing for September 2024

We have a very experienced teaching staff at Durham Johnston and our teachers tend to dedicate their careers to the school. They are currently planning very carefully to ensure that students and their families have a clear sense of the subject content, assessment and extension work that they will prioritise in September.

We are also saying goodbye to a number of staff members in 2024. **Mr O'Sullivan** (History and our Headteacher since 2018) and **Mr Wright** (History and Deputy Headteacher) are both moving onto new posts after significant service to the school. Mr O'Sullivan will be working at Newcastle University and Mr Wright is to become Headteacher at Framwellgate School. They have been loyal members of staff and have contributed to the success of large numbers of our students as both teachers and school leaders. Mr O'Sullivan joined the school in 1997 and Mr Wright in 2018, after previously working at the school at the start of his career. **Mrs Yibulayin** (Mandarin) is leaving us after 17 years, **Mrs Hart** (D&T) after 11 years and **Miss Daghish** (Languages) after 6 years. We also say goodbye to our Data Manager, **Dr Tapp** and a number of teachers who have been with us in a temporary capacity. They are **Mr Henderson** (Maths), **Mrs Horsfield** (English), and **Miss Woznicka** (Art). We have also thanked **Mr Senior**, from

Durham's Music Service, for all that he has done for the musical life of the school since 2012. We wish all of those leaving best wishes and every success for the future.

There have been a number of other changes in terms of staffing for September 2024, with existing staff taking on additional roles and new appointments and a new teacher joining us for the new academic year. The most significant appointment is that of **Mrs McFadden** to the role of **Acting Headteacher** from September 2024. Mrs McFadden is the school's Senior Deputy Headteacher and was previously Assistant Headteacher and Subject Leader for Maths. She has been Deputy Headteacher for 7 years and will bring a wealth of experience to her new role, having played a central role in the school's success since 2017.

Other in school changes for 2024-25

- **Mr Banner** – appointed as permanent 2nd in Science.
- **Mrs Gibb** – appointed as permanent Lead for Chemistry.
- **Mrs Hardwick** - appointed as permanent 2nd in Geography.
- **Mr Middleton** – appointed as permanent Subject Leader for Science.
- **Mr Ray** – appointed as permanent Subject Leader for Geography.

We also have one new member of staff joining us.

New staff joining Durham Johnston in 2024-25

Mr Ingram – will be joining us in English.

We have some additional plans in place for the summer break and some important maintenance of the school building. The school will be open throughout the summer but please be aware that teaching staff will not be present and that we will not be able to deal with queries quickly if they are subject specific or are for specific staff members.

Summer Dates & Information

- **A Level & GCSE Results Days** - There are two results days in August. A level results day is Thursday 15th August 2024 and GCSE results are shared on Thursday 22nd August. There are [letters outlining our plans for both days on the school website](#).
- We will continue to provide a significant level of support for our current Year 11 and 13 students as they prepare for their next steps to 6th form study, university, work, or an apprenticeship. Mr Wilbraham has written to all Year 13 students to explain how we will support them as part of the **A Level results' day on Thursday 15th August 2024**.
- We are also very keen to offer continuing support to all of our Year 11 students. Students will receive their **GCSE results on Thursday 22nd August**, and we will provide help and support to ensure that all of our students are clear about their next steps. **Please check the school website in the weeks beginning 12th and 19th August for any updates, as that is where we will provide any additional information about our results days and any changes that are necessary to the plans that have already been shared.**
- **Mental health Summer Holiday Wellbeing Campaign** – During the summer holidays **Kooth** want to make sure that children and young people know that they are still available for them. They understand that many young people may be quite reliant on the support they receive while they are at school. students can still access free, safe,

and anonymous mental health support on Kooth.com during the summer holidays. They can do so by visiting: go.kooth.com/sRw9. There are a number of other suggestions on how to access support via our school website. We have also shared additional resources on how to remain well over the summer period.

Start of Term Dates - Please also note that the school term **starts for all Year 7 to 11 students on Wednesday 4th September. The 6th Form Team have shared a different arrangement for Years 12 and 13.**

We are very mindful that it has been a challenging year for many of our students and their families. We are keen to celebrate success, to offer more support to each year group and to make lessons as engaging and well taught as possible. We will also focus very strongly on our ethos and will ensure that all members of our school community are treated respectfully, with kindness, and fairly. We also expect students to meet that standard and, in particular, to have a positive attitude to learning. No one has the right to take learning opportunities away from others and we know that all students understand that key point. The following information regarding safeguarding, communication, the use of mobile phones, and uniform should offer a clear understanding of both school and parental responsibilities when it comes to each of these key areas of school life. We are a community with high expectations, and it is important that we all work together positively.

Safeguarding & Speaking Up

Mrs Bell, Deputy Headteacher, is our Designated Safeguarding Lead. She leads a team of 5 additional Deputy Safeguarding Leads. They are:

- **Mr Simpson** – Key Stage 3 Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- **Mr Bowman** - Key Stage 4 Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- **Mr Wilbraham** – Head of 6th Form and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- **Miss Davies** - SENCo and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- **Mrs Wood** – Student Support Centre Manager and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.

All members of the school staff are safeguarding trained, with the school's Leadership Team and Year Leaders having enhanced training experience. We take our commitments very seriously and have a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of prejudicial behaviour or harassment. If any student is worried about an issue, they should speak with their Year Leader or a member of the school leadership team. The list of safeguarding staff can also be found in each student's organiser and on the school website. We encourage students to speak up and, if they observe someone else in difficult circumstances, to never be a bystander. **If you have any safeguarding concerns always contact the school directly. We will treat all concerns seriously, will respect confidentiality where possible and will always investigate thoroughly.**

Students will make mistakes and we will prioritise educating those that do and offering opportunities to apologise and put things right, but we will not accept anyone being made to feel deliberately uncomfortable by others. We have a zero-tolerance attitude towards bullying, and a commitment to educate all students so that they can avoid dangerous situations. We also take our time to understand each unique situation and would encourage

parents and carers not to take everything that they are told at home at face value. In addition, please be aware as a parent or carer that the most common safeguarding concern identified in school is linked to the misuse of social media or inappropriate use of social media outside of school. We have a responsibility to educate all children about how to stay safe online and to understand the importance of kindness to others within our community. Mobile phones are not allowed in school for any reason, and any misuse of social media or mobile phones outside of school is unequivocally a parental responsibility. We have a duty of care to safeguard students, staff members and those that visit our school.

Please engage with the school positively, give us time to investigate any concerns that you may raise and do not rush to judgement.

School Communication

We will continue to offer regular weekly updates and additional guidance if appropriate. The Friday Bulletin will return in September, outlining extra-curricular opportunities and celebrating student success across the school and within and beyond subject areas. We will also host a series of Parent Information Evenings, as well as small focus groups for each year group and for parents of children with a specific learning need. Communication is vitally important, and we want to be able to contact all parents and carers as appropriate. **Therefore, please write to the school with any new email addresses and telephone numbers so that you can keep up to date with what is happening in school.**

If you need to contact the school, please be aware that **teachers are unavailable between 8.20 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. each day and cannot easily respond to telephone calls or emails.** We are always happy to communicate with parents and carers if there is an issue or significant development, but it is important to note that school staff will be working with students before and after those times too. They teach, meet with and safeguard students, attend meetings and plan. We always try to respond to any query within 3 working days, as is common in most professional organisations. Parents or carers should never arrive at school expecting to see a staff member without a prearranged appointment. Parents and carers doing so will be asked to leave and to arrange an appointment, if appropriate, at a later date and time. Parents or carers should never demand immediate action or behave in an aggressive or threatening manner. We will limit interaction with any parent or carers conducting themselves in this way. We will treat all parents and carers in a professional and respectful manner and expect exactly the same in return.

If you have any concerns regarding a safeguarding issue, please make sure that reception staff are aware, and we will always act very quickly.

Mobile Phones, Inappropriate Use of Social Media & Positive Behaviour

Our rules regarding mobile phone are simple. **Mobile phones are not allowed to be used, seen, or heard anywhere on the school site or at any point during the school day. Students do not have a right to use their mobile phones on the school site.** Any student failing to follow this clear rule will have their phone confiscated and a behaviour point added to Class Charts. School provides an opportunity for respite from constant communication and allows student to talk and interact in person. To avoid confusion there are some other very simple rules regarding mobile phones, communication, and social media use:

- No student has permission to film or record any other member of the school community. **Any student filming another student or staff member in school will face a serious sanction.** Filming or recording other members of the school community without their consent is illegal.
- Similarly, the school will take extremely seriously any negative or unsubstantiated comments directed at staff members via social media and will take legal advice if comments of an illegal or criminal nature are made which target staff members.
- It is completely unacceptable to share pictures, request pictures or bully others online. The school has a zero-tolerance attitude to this form of behaviour.
- It is unacceptable to make unkind, illegal, or prejudicial comments about other people based upon their characteristics, background, or circumstances. Actions in or outside of school have consequences.
- As a parent, discuss how your child uses their phone and make sure that they do not behave in any of the unacceptable ways identified above. We emphasise that students should not be bystanders, nor should parents. There is national research into the dangers of letting children keep phones in their room overnight and it is always sensible to discuss what your child is looking at online. **These are key parental responsibilities that will help you to safeguard your child and are not the responsibility of the school.**
- We will always offer support and guidance and regularly share E-Safety alerts via the school website. Please be aware that there are clear legal age limits on many forms of social media, and we will educate children about this via PHSE and Computing lessons.
- Discuss the unrealistic nature of relationships and human bodies that are frequently shared online and use internet controls at home to protect your child from unregulated online content.
- Please also encourage your child to think carefully before making negative or thoughtless comments about other students via social media. **Parents have responsibility for regulating social media use and for ensuring that there are consequences for offensive and unkind behaviour.** As parents or carers, I would also encourage you to avoid negative, inaccurate, or provocative comments on social media about other members of the school community. We will continue to offer guidance to students about how to de-escalate situations and to avoid confrontation with others. It is important that parents support us in this and set a good example.
- Many of the negative situations that we address in school are caused by students making poor decisions in relation to social media use outside of school. Please act upon the advice given above and be aware that the behaviour of your child outside of school is a parental responsibility. We will offer support and guidance, but it is a parental choice whether or not children use mobile phones and access social media. **We will not be able to engage with issues outside of school if parents and carers have not fulfilled this basic parental responsibility.**
- Please can I also encourage you to talk at home about the importance of behaving in a considerate and socially responsible manner on the way to and from school? Parents and carers are responsible for the behaviour of their children as they travel to and from school and it is important that you discuss how to treat other members of our local community respectfully.

- Finally, we are committed to offering a wide range of opportunities for students to be physically active and healthy. Please encourage your child to participate in sports clubs and to use our facilities. Another aspect of good health involves the school taking firm action when students are at risk of harming their health. **Please ensure that your child is aware that the school will sanction any student found to have a vape in school. Like you, we are concerned about the lack of national regulation or enforcement regarding children and vaping.**

If you are unsure about any of the above points or need help in order to safeguard your child and to understand the dangers of social media and how to keep your child safe online, please contact the school and we are happy to offer guidance and support.

Each year a small number of students encourage their families to buy inappropriate uniform during the summer months. We are very keen that parents have full access to our uniform policy and understand how it is based upon the school's commitment to social justice.

Buying the Correct Uniform for September 2024

Our school uniform is intended to be affordable, fair and to ensure that all students are members of the same, equal community. **That represents the school's strong commitment to equality and social justice.** Please be aware that we have a selection of high-quality uniform available that has been donated by parents and carers and we have also purchased new uniform for students to use if they choose to wear incorrect uniform. Please contact the school if you need any additional support with uniform.

For those of you who will be buying new items of uniform this summer, the uniform requirements are set out in our uniform guidance, which can be accessed here: [Uniform | Durham Johnston School](#)

Please do not buy inappropriate uniform over the summer. If in doubt, please use the uniform guide and contact the school with additional questions.

We have emphasised to all students that uniform needs to be worn in a particular way, and we are committed to be fair and consistent in the language that we use in relation to uniform, and in how we apply the rules for all students. It is always important to review school uniform and we intend to discuss what students wear with representative groups from each year group as the year progresses. **To avoid unnecessary issues that can impact upon student learning, please ensure that clothing is not made from stretch Lycra or knitted fabrics. Uniform should be functional, appropriate, and allow all students to move around the school freely.**

In addition to the above uniform advice, a reminder that if your child is intending to get their ears pierced, they should do so at the very beginning of the summer holiday, so that their piercings can heal and be safely removed for September. Piercings are not allowed in school and students are fully aware of this fact. The same rule applies for false eyelashes and false nails.

These are small things, but our rules are clear, and Form Tutors and senior staff will work with all students on a weekly basis to ensure that uniform issues do not limit opportunities to be part of our community or to learn.

Please work positively with the school so that your child's first interaction with school staff in September is a positive one, with a clear focus on being ready to learn and to play an active

role within our community. Parental support for the school's behaviour and uniform policies is paramount in ensuring a successful education for your child.

We will continue to work very hard across the summer months to make sure that our students have the guidance, structure and support that they need to be successful in 2024-25. Please check the school website regularly for updates and encourage your child to check their school email account and Microsoft Teams. For our part, we will continue to find ways to improve our communication and to engage with parents and carers. By working positively in partnership with the school, you can help us to continue providing the highest quality education possible for all children at Durham Johnston. We hope that you and your family have a good summer and that we can all approach our return in September with a sense of shared purpose and anticipation.

Thank you again for your ongoing support; it is greatly appreciated by the entire staff.

Yours faithfully,

Mr O'Sullivan and Mrs McFadden



Headteacher: A J O'Sullivan BA, MA

Assistant Heads: H Davies BA
C Robson BA
J Wilbraham BA

Deputy Heads: J Bell BSc, MA
R McFadden MEng
M J Wright BA

Associate Assistant Heads: A Colquitt BSc, MEd
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