



DARE TO BE WISE
at
**DURHAM JOHNSTON
COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**



**125 years of
academic excellence**



Life in the Sixth Form

2026-27

A guide for students and parents



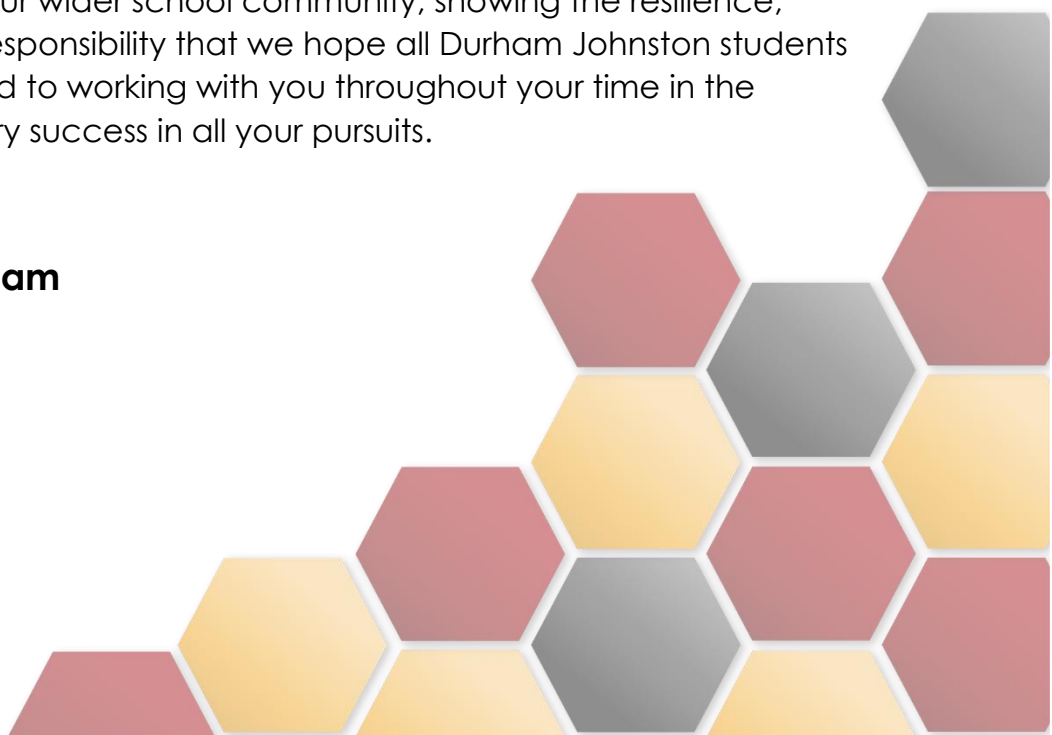
Welcome to Durham Johnston Sixth Form

Durham Johnston is proud to be an 11–18 comprehensive school with a 125-year history of academic excellence and service to the young people of Durham City. Our Sixth Form is a thriving community of approximately 350 students, with an outstanding track record of academic success and personal development. Our Sixth Form provision was judged Outstanding by Ofsted in 2025, with inspectors describing it as “exceptional”. We are proud of our national reputation and the breadth of opportunities we offer through sport, music, performing arts, leadership, mentoring, volunteering and student societies. We are committed to preparing students not only for Higher Education and employment, but also to become informed, adaptable and responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to modern British society.

To all students starting Year 12 courses, we warmly welcome you to the Sixth Form. We are delighted to be working with you for the next two important years as you enter adulthood and feel privileged to support you as you realise your academic and career ambitions. We will provide you with excellent specialist teaching, individualised pastoral support and opportunities beyond the classroom, enabling you to develop as an informed, adaptable and capable learner. We encourage you to go beyond the examination specification, develop your intellectual curiosity and discover a genuine love of learning. Through our House System, you will also have opportunities to develop leadership skills, mentor younger students, contribute to charitable fundraising and play an active role in our wider community. Whatever your future destination – university, a degree apprenticeship, professional training or employment – we will support you in fulfilling your individual ambitions.

We ask that you work hard, listen to your teachers, ask when you are unsure about anything and make the most of the opportunities available to you. We also ask that you be a positive role model in our wider school community, showing the resilience, independence and social responsibility that we hope all Durham Johnston students will develop. We look forward to working with you throughout your time in the Sixth Form and wish you every success in all your pursuits.

Sixth Form Leadership Team





Who are the Sixth Form team?

Mr P Bray	Director of Sixth Form
Miss K Simpson	Deputy Head of Sixth Form
Mrs A Ward	Pastoral Year Lead
Mrs M Doy	Sixth Form Administrator
Mr J Bann	EPQ Lead

The School Day

08.20	All pupils to be on site and moving towards their Form Class, or Assembly. The student gates will be locked at 8.20am
08.25	Registration or assembly (extended form time until 9am one day a week)
08.45	Lesson 1
09.45	Lesson 2
10.45	Morning break
11.00	Lesson 3
12.00	Lunch
12.45	Lesson 4
13.45	Lesson 5
14.45	End of the school day for timetabled lessons

Usually access to Sixth Form area and Café 6 will be available before and after the times above, where students sometimes choose to work pre-school (from 7.30am) and until approximately 5:30pm. We have a wide and varied range of student-led societies running at lunchtimes and after school. These are an excellent way to meet with people of similar interests, explore topics beyond the classroom and develop your organisation, project management and communication skills.



Form time and Personal Development.

Form time is an important part of the school day. As well as receiving one to one support from their tutors, students will also be given key notices, letters, forms and reports during form time. One morning a week is extended form where we deliver the statutory PD (personal development) curriculum. This includes lessons on financial planning, risk management and well-being, as well as sessions delivered by external providers on issues such road safety and consent.

Catering

Sixth Form students have a choice of purchasing food from the main student server, the Atrium Café or they can go off site. We have a cashless catering system where parents can pay for meals in advance using the *ParentPay* facility on the school website. While there are always some problems with such sophisticated technology, the system generally works very well. If you encounter a problem with *ParentPay* please contact a member of staff in the **School Office** and they will offer assistance. Sixth Form students are also able to use their debit card at the Atrium Café. Drinking water is usually available from chilled mains water dispensers around the school and students are encouraged to fill their bottles before school, or at break or lunch time. Students are allowed water in class (but not in Science, Computer Science or other practical lessons). We do not allow energy drinks in school and will always confiscate such drinks if we see or find them.

Car Park

Please do not arrange to bring students to school by car unless this is absolutely unavoidable. We do not have any parking or drop-off space for parents on our site and we are instructed by the Local Authority and police to prevent parents coming onto the site in cars, as our car park is so congested that extra dropping-off vehicles constitute a safety hazard. Students driving themselves to school should be aware that there is no easy parking in the local area. Space is very limited and is entirely in residential streets. Poorly parked cars make access to residents' drives and pavements an issue and they are likely to complain to the school or to the police. Sixth Formers are inexperienced drivers so we understand mistakes can be made, however as drivers, students must take responsibility for their own actions. Students need to be able to park carefully and within the law. If you have a registered disability and need to drive as a result, please talk to us separately.

School Buses

School buses are run by the local authority and applications to use the buses must be made directly to them. Timetables and further information on how to access these can be found on the website: <https://www.durham.gov.uk>



Uniform

Sixth Form students set an example to the main school students, and this should consistently be a positive model. The uniform and the way it is worn reflects students' attitudes to the Durham Johnston community and their studies. We expect all students to be smart and professional in their dress.

Uniform policy

Students must choose from the following:	
Black formal trousers - straight leg or bootcut style only, no leggings or jeans. Trousers must be full length. or Black formal style skirt. Skirts should be of reasonable length suitable for a professional setting.	Optional Plain black V-necked pullover or cardigan or Sixth Form hoodies. Hoodies can be ordered directly from the school upon enrolment to the sixth form.
AND	
White shirt (short or long sleeved) worn with a Durham Johnston Sixth Form tie (available from Parkins). The Sixth Form Office also hold a small stock. or White formal blouse (short or long sleeved) with collar. T-shirts should not be worn.	
AND	
Plain black opaque tights/socks Plain, formal shoes or boots Plain/all black trainers	

Students who arrive at school wearing incorrect uniform may be sent home.

Outdoor clothing, including hats and scarves must not be worn inside the school building.

A moderate amount of jewellery may be worn.

PE Kit

Sixth Formers involved in PE department activities may wear the department activity uniform on days of participation.

- Plain black running leggings or tracksuit bottoms
- Plain red sweatshirt or DJCS training top (optional)
- White plain polo shirt or T-shirt
- Trainers (indoor and outdoor)

Durham Johnston training tops and tracksuits are available to purchase from the PE department.



Attendance

Excellent attendance is a key part of A-Level success and in terms of students' next steps, attendance will be explicitly commented on in university and employment references. It is a basic expectation for students to attend all form periods, assemblies and academic classes, including private study and PHE (Preparing for Higher Education).

Students are expected to stay on site throughout the school day apart from lunchtime when Sixth Formers are allowed to leave school premises and when home study is part of their timetable. Sometimes pastoral or subject activities will be arranged outside of normal class times, but within the school day. These take priority over all other arrangements. It is for the school to decide whether a particular absence is to be authorised or not.

Reporting absences

In the first instance, it is the responsibility of parents or carers to report absences. Parents should **contact the school using Class Charts or telephone the main school office before 8.30am on 0191 384 3887** to report students' unexpected absences. This must be done on every day of the absence. If a student is expected to be absent for a number of days, details must be given on the expected return to school date and updates given during the period of absence.

If a student becomes unwell during the school day, or needs to leave due to an emergency, the student must report to the Sixth Form office. Here they can access first aid and contact will be made directly with a parent, carer or appropriate family member. Students cannot leave the school site without permission from both a family member and a member of the Sixth Form team, in order to safeguard their welfare. Please ensure that the emergency contact details the school holds are up to date.

Planned absence

If an absence is known about in advance, it is students' and parents' responsibility to notify the school and request work as far in advance as possible. A decision on authorising a planned absence cannot be made by the school until **a Request for Approved Absence form (a 'blue' form)** has been collected from the Sixth Form office, completed by the student and parent/carer and returned to the office. Alongside this, evidence of an appointment, open day or interview must be provided to the school before authorisation can be given. Alternatively, parents/carers can email the school address school@durhamjohnston.org.uk FAO of the Sixth Form office, stating the reason for the requested approved absence with the appropriate evidence attached.

Concerns will be raised with parents/carers if there are a significant number of repeated absence requests.

No planned absences will be approved during Year 12 or Year 13 mock exam weeks or the national exam period. These dates will be shared with students at the start of each term.

In the most sensitive of circumstances, please notify the Sixth Form leadership team on 0191 384 3887 and request a phone appointment for a private discussion.



Reasons for planned absence

The following list gives some examples of situations where an absence may be authorised if they are believed to be genuine and unavoidable, with evidence provided:

- Non-routine hospital, dentist or GP appointments
- Diagnosed medical conditions that require ongoing hospital treatment
- Family bereavements
- Court attendance for jury service
- University or apprenticeship interviews
- Designated religious festival

We cannot authorise absences for driving lessons or tests. Holidays must not be taken during term time and will not be approved.

Requests for extended leave of absence

There may be exceptional circumstances where students need to request an extended Leave of Absence that goes beyond one school day. These cannot be approved by the Sixth Form team. Students must ask for a **Leave of Absence Form ('pink' form)** from main school reception. It is then down to the discretion of the Headteacher as to whether a request for leave can be granted as authorised.

Punctuality

The school gates close at 8.20am and form time begins at 8.25am. Students are expected to be at form time, or assembly, to receive important notices, letters, advice and guidance from their tutors and access their statutory Personal Development programme. Students' punctuality will be monitored by staff and concerns communicated with home. Subject departments will also monitor punctuality to lessons and again, any concerns will be raised. Possible sanctions include revocation of home study or after school payback of time until punctuality has significantly improved.

Late passes

We understand that for a small number of students, situations outside of their control may mean that they cannot always arrive to school on time. These students may apply for a late pass, either on a temporary basis (e.g., for a short-term injury) or for the academic year (e.g., for travel distance). A late pass application form can be collected from the Sixth Form office and must be returned, signed by parent and student, before a late pass can be issued.

Late passes are conditional and will be reviewed termly. If a student fails to keep up to date with notices or the PD curriculum, the late pass may be revoked.



External commitments

Whilst we support Sixth Form students in exploring opportunities outside of school and undertaking part time work, studying an A-Level programme is a full-time, in person, commitment. It is therefore vitally important that students:

- Do not book driving lessons or tests during the hours of the school day.
- Do not undertake a high number of hours of part-time employment (recommended no more than 10 hours per week).
- Do not commit to work shifts or training that begins before the school days ends.
- Understand that home study periods can be revoked and changed, and there may be times in the academic year where timetables need to be amended and reissued.
- Understand that both national and mock exams will extend beyond the school day. These cannot be moved due to a student's external commitments.

If students undertake a significant number of paid hours in employment, we will no longer be able to register them as a full-time student. This will affect bursary payments and some child benefits.

Truancy

If a student does not attend a timetabled lesson (including private study) without a reason provided, this will be categorised as truancy. This will be communicated with the student and their parent or carer and the appropriate sanction will be issued. This may include temporary removal of home study, attendance to an additional lesson, or internal suspension for repeated occurrences.

Monitoring of attendance

As with all schools, colleges and employers, the Sixth Form team will monitor attendance of all students and communicate concerns with students and parents/carers.





We will endeavour to support students and their parents/carers in maintaining good attendance. Below sets out the stages of support.

Stage 1: Below expectations - 94-90%

- Stage one letter home.
- Discussion between student and form tutor about absence and potential support.
- Potential removal of home study temporarily (two weeks in the first instance).

Stage 2: Cause for concern - 89-85%

- Stage two letter home and contact with parents/carers.
- Discussion between student and Pastoral Year Lead about absence and potential support.
- Potential home study removal. Reviewed on half termly basis.
- Extension of probationary period.

Stage 3: Serious concern - below 85%

- Discussion between student, parents and Deputy Head of Sixth Form about absence and potential support.
- Home study revoked pending review in light of sustained, improved attendance.
- Extension of probationary period.
- Potential reduction in study programme.

Stage 4: Sustained concern - below 80%

- Discussion between student, parents and Head of Sixth Form about absence and review of curriculum offer.
- Parent/student payment of exam entries, in line with DFE guidance.
- Bursary payments reviewed.

Stage 5: Continued absence, below 80% and no sustained improvement since stage 4.

- Discussion between student, parents and Deputy Head/Headteacher about absence and review of curriculum offer.
- Parent/student payment of exam entries, in line with DFE guidance.
- Offer of place of study reviewed immediately.
- Fit to study assessment (where appropriate to the context).

In the circumstance of continued absence, Durham Johnston will follow DFE guidelines. Where appropriate, continued absence can see bursary payments temporarily suspended or in the most acute of cases, the offer of a place to study withdrawn.

Barriers to attendance

We pride ourselves in being a supportive, inclusive community and therefore parents/carers are encouraged to disclose to the school any physical or mental health need, as well as any significant personal circumstances, so that we can establish how best to support the individual student. Early disclosure of information can help the school to offer the appropriate support and make contact with other agencies where necessary. This prompt sharing of information is also especially important for those students joining the Sixth Form from other secondary schools.



Limits to support

Durham Johnston is not a distance learning provider so full in-person attendance is a basic requirement for completion of study at A-Level. Furthermore, our resources and the support available are both finite so there must be reasonable expectations on what can be offered, as all the school's students' needs must be catered for. Durham Johnston will endeavour to make reasonable adjustments but there may well be times where the school will judge that it has made sufficient reasonable adjustments, having exhausted all support options available.

Conduct

Sixth Form is non-compulsory education. All students who come to Durham Johnston must sign the student agreement (also counter signed by a parent or carer), which sets out the expectations of behaviour. This includes:

- Punctual attendance of form time, private study, PHE and lessons.
- Wear the Sixth Form uniform, as set out online.
- Home study is a privilege in recognition of students' ability to work independently. It is a privilege that can be revoked.
- Personal development is a compulsory component of the students' education in preparation for life in modern Britain. Form time, assemblies and extended PD sessions are all compulsory.
- Part-time work is an important part of students' increasing maturity and responsibility. However, part time work is not to be undertaken during the hours of the school day. The students' priority is their timetable at Durham Johnston.
- This is a non-smoking/non-vaping site. Students failing to follow this rule will face disciplinary procedures as outlined in the school's behaviour policy and sixth form student agreement.
- Students should not leave site at unauthorised times and not bring anyone onsite who is not cleared to visit the school.
- IT usage is monitored. Failure to follow appropriate usage terms and conditions will face disciplinary procedures as outlined in the school's behaviour policy and sixth form student agreement.
- Students are expected to check their school email inbox and Teams regularly and communicate with staff appropriately through these channels.
- Using language in and around the school site that is appropriate to a professional setting, especially in the vicinity of younger children.
- Mobile phones are restricted in their use. Only in the designated Sixth Form Area or Café 6 can phones be used. Phones cannot be used in the main school building. Students must follow instructions from staff immediately and make a positive contribution to the school community.

All of the above is designed to support students with a productive, supportive climate for learning that should enable them to make the academic progress to fulfil their next step ambitions.

Conduct in lessons, form time and in the wider school community before, during and after school, matters. The school can temporarily or permanently withdraw an offer of a place to study here if terms of the Student Agreement are broken. The school's behaviour policy can be found on our website: [About Us > School Policies](#)



Financial Support

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome the specific financial barriers to participation in education. If students face such barriers and meet the criteria, they are encouraged to apply for this support. If students successfully apply for a bursary, they may be eligible to receive support with costs related to: school meals, travel for education purposes, school uniform, essential books and equipment not supplied by the school, field study visits, exam resits and university applications and related expenses.

The criteria and full bursary policy can be found on our website under [Sixth Form > Financial Support](#). Students can complete the application form at that link – or in the enrolment pack they will receive in September - and return it to the school along with all the supporting evidence.

Programme of Study

At Durham Johnston Sixth Form, we offer a broad range of A-Level qualifications. We currently offer 24 A-Level qualifications – please see the courses booklet on our website for the most up to date information, including entry requirements.

Year 12

Four to three A-Levels

All students begin on 4 A-Levels for the first seven weeks of the academic year and remain in school for full days. During this time, students can swap into other A-Levels (timetable blocks and class sizes dependant) in order to find the subjects most suited to them and their potential future destinations. This is supported by guidance from subject teachers and the Sixth Form team. The majority of students complete three A-Levels across two academic years, but some students may choose to sit additional AS-Levels or, in some cases, four full A-Levels. There are four points at which students can drop from four to three A-Levels:

- October, following the issue of the 'Settling in' report.
- January, following the issue of the academic report. It is at this point we have to enter students for AS exams in the summer.
- July, following AS exams.
- September, following AS exam results received in August.

'Settling in' period

On starting A-Level study, all Year 12 students are classed as being 'on probation' during the first half term of the new academic year, known as the 'Settling in' period. Students and parents/carers will receive a report at the end of this period. They will be removed from probation and granted home study if departments and the Sixth Form team are satisfied that acceptable levels of effort and progress in class, independent study, punctuality, attendance and uniform have been met, as indicated on the report. Students will not be removed from probation (with resultant closer monitoring from Durham Johnston staff) until sufficient improvements have been made to meet the school's basic expectations.



Private study

Around their subject lessons, students will have timetabled **private study** sessions where they are expected to work on site. Students can work in the supervised silent study area or in the cafe, as well as having the option to work in specialised areas of the school, such as in art. They will be registered by the sixth form supervisor and can also use this time to access one to one support from the Sixth Form leadership team, classroom teachers and support staff. Students can also use this time to complete enrichment activities, including mentoring and the EPQ.

Home study

As students make the transition from GCSE through sixth form to university, we feel that they should be given increasing responsibility for managing their own study. We usually allow students one afternoon of **home study** where they can spend some of their non-contact periods working at home rather than supervised in school. This is granted to students once they have successfully passed the probationary period of Year 12, but is a privilege that can be revoked if students are not keeping up with expectations.

PHE

As well as their main subjects, students follow our PHE (Preparation for Higher Education) and careers guidance programme to help them select the most appropriate course and institution for them and prepare them for the next steps post Sixth Form. A description of the programme to help students prepare for life after A Levels is outlined below.

- Higher education and the alternatives, especially degree apprenticeships
- Labour market information
- Types of institutions
- Types of courses
- Teaching and learning at university
- Contextual offers and schemes
- Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)
- Personal statements
- Interviews
- Student finance
- Gap years
- Opportunities to visit universities, apprenticeship fayres and UCAS discovery event

All Year 12 students also complete work experience in July.

EPQ

We also offer the EPQ to enhance application to university, apprenticeship or employment. EPQ stands for extended project qualification. It is an independent research task and involves either writing an extended essay of about 5,000 words or creating a product with an accompanying shorter essay of about 3,000 words. This product could be anything from a drone to an app to a music composition. Both options require a presentation to your peers and assessors for about 10–15 minutes at the end of the EPQ journey about the final product. An EPQ is worth valuable UCAS points and can form part of a personal statement. It also develops useful skills like research, essay writing and presentation skills which will come in useful for A levels and beyond.



Enrichment

There are a wide range of enrichment and leadership opportunities that sixth form students can take part in. Although ever-changing, below are just some of the enrichment opportunities currently on offer:

- **Societies:** these are student led and range from the very academic (quantum computing) through to those that are more social (the Taylor Swift society)
- **House leads:** sixth form students lead house events and competitions, as well as charity fundraising events
- **Debate**
- **MedSoc group**
- **Oxbridge group**
- **Year 11 mentoring**
- **Year 7 paired reading**
- **Library leads**
- **Mental health ambassadors**
- **Subject ambassadors**
- **Sports**
- **Music**

Year 12 into Year 13

Students must pass their end of Year 12 examinations in order to continue that subject into Year 13 (Grade E or below suggests success at A-Level is highly unlikely). If a Year 13 September resit does not see sufficient improvement to the student's grade in the subject, alternative Year 12 courses will be explored, albeit priority for those courses must go to new starters in Year 12.

We hope this document answers most, if not all, of your questions about life in Durham Johnston's Sixth Form.

If there are any enquiries or further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Email school@durhamjohnston.org.uk FAO Sixth Form

