



THE ORATORY  
PREP SCHOOL



PARENT HANDBOOK

2025-2026

# Vision & Virtues

Our vision is to provide outstanding learning experiences for all. The vision for our school is based on the life and ideas of our Founder, St. John Henry Newman. We live the motto Newman bequeathed the school, 'Cor Ad Cor Loquitur' (Heart Speaks to Heart) with an emphasis on being courteous and respectful, showing kindness, consideration and compassion with a willingness to forgive and be open to change. This is reflected in the relationships between the children and their teachers. It underpins the strength and spirit of our school community in which our children grow and begin to realise their potential and their contribution to society.

Our school values, referred to as Virtues, are Curiosity, Kindness and Wisdom.

**Curiosity:** Our children are used to being inquisitive learners who have shared desires to learn - sometimes in conventional ways, and sometimes not. But they are always keen to ask questions, explore, examine and throw themselves into finding out more. Our excellent school site really does help them to ask searching questions.

**Kindness:** Kindness at The Oratory Prep School can take many forms - not just that of the generosity seen by our pupils daily when they reflect on their place in the world, or indeed the acts of consideration on the playground. Of course, we also work to encourage our children to be kind to themselves so that they can nurture their own self-worth and continue to make a difference to those around them.

**Wisdom:** Wisdom is more than just the shared knowledge our children gain from school; it's the experiences around our education which provides them with curriculum skills, life skills, and the ability to apply these in the right way and at the right time - thereby making Wisdom the confidence to make decisions based on our experiences.

## Catholic Life

Mass, religious observance and studying liturgies in a Catholic school offers numerous benefits to children, as it plays a vital role in their spiritual, intellectual and moral development. Catholic teachings often emphasize virtues like love, compassion, forgiveness and humility. By studying and participating in liturgical celebrations, children learn the importance of these values and how to incorporate them into their daily lives, leading to a greater character development. It builds a strong spiritual foundation and helps children develop relationships within our school community and, should they choose, with God.

## OPS Terminology

At The Oratory Prep School we sometimes refer to year groups in sections as follows.

**Little Oaks** = Nursery, Kindergarten and Pre-Reception

**Pre-Prep** = Reception, Year 1 & Year 2

**Prep** = Years 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8

If you see the term "EYFS", this stands for Early Years Foundation Stage and refers to children in Nursery, Kindergarten, Pre-Reception and Reception

**Michaelmas** = Autumn Term

**Lent** = Spring Term

**Trinity** = Summer Term

**Half Term:** At the start of half term the school day finishes as per a normal school day.

**End of Term:** All terms end at 12.00pm for children in Pre-Prep and 12.30pm for Prep pupils. There is no afternoon school bus on these days. Little Oaks timings remain as normal.

# Houses

When children reach Reception, they are assigned to one of our four Houses, named after significant places in the school's history: Branksome, Caversham, Elston and Rosehill. Siblings are placed in the same House. Houses compete against one another in a number of competitions such as Inter-House Music, Sports and Spelling Bees. The outcomes of these events, combined with house points awarded to students for outstanding contributions inside and outside of the classroom, go towards the overall competition and yearly house champions!



# Absence Procedures

Children who leave before the end of the school day must be signed out at the Main Reception before departure. Children who leave and return to school during the day (for example, for a dental appointment) must be signed out by a parent/carer when leaving and in again on their return. No pupil may leave the school grounds unless accompanied by staff, parents or guardians, or those the school has been informed are responsible for their transport.

Permission for absence for any reason other than illness (for example medical appointments) must be sought in advance by contacting the Headmaster. This is also necessary for absences from Games commitments and matches.

In the case of absence through illness, the School Office must be notified on the first day of absence by email or telephone with details of the absence and should be updated on a daily basis before 9.00am. Failure to do so will result in a telephone call from the school. Absences for which permission has not been granted will be recorded as unauthorised and will be noted on the child's school record.

# Breakfast Club

Breakfast Club takes place in the Dining Hall between 7.30am - 8.15am for children in Reception to Year 8. Children should be dropped off at the Main Reception where our boarding staff will take care of them. Breakfast Club runs on Monday - Friday mornings only and costs £11 per day. To book a place please contact the Boarding Staff. ([boarding@oratoryprep.co.uk](mailto:boarding@oratoryprep.co.uk))

# Late Collection Care

In case of emergency, we offer parents for children in Reception - Year 8 wraparound care after 6pm. Children will join the boarding house after 6pm and will be given supper. There is a £22 charge per child. If you need to collect your child late from school, please get in contact with The School Office. ([office@oratoryprep.co.uk](mailto:office@oratoryprep.co.uk))

# Flexi-Boarding

Flexi-boarding is available 7 days a week for pupils in Year 3 and above, subject to availability, and includes supper, prep supervision, on site activities and breakfast. We provide all the bedding, all you need to pack is an overnight bag and towel. To book a place, please email [boarding@oratoryprep.co.uk](mailto:boarding@oratoryprep.co.uk). The cost per night is £63. Please take a look at our Flexi-Boarding booklet for more information.

# Parent Activities

When a child joins The Oratory Prep School, parents too join the school community. We are proud to offer the following activities in term time as a way to connect with other families. To find out more please contact Mrs Thomas. ([h.thomas@oratoryprep.co.uk](mailto:h.thomas@oratoryprep.co.uk))

Day	Activity	Time	Location	Notes
Monday	Choir	8:15 - 8:45am	Headmaster's Office	All abilities welcome
Tuesday	Swimming	8.15 - 9.15am	Pool	All welcome, please bring a swimming hat
Wednesday	Tennis	8.15 - 9am	Tennis Courts	Please contact Mrs Balfour to book: <a href="mailto:gemma@yewtreetennis.com">gemma@yewtreetennis.com</a>
Sunday	Hockey	2 - 3pm	Astroturf	All abilities welcome
Sunday	Football	3 - 4pm	Astroturf	All abilities welcome

## FOPS

FOPS is the parents' organisation at The Oratory Prep School, and was founded in 1994. Our vision is to foster the OPS community by welcoming new families and creating events within the school year to enhance the OPS experience for all pupils, parents, teachers and staff.

Some of the highlights of the school year include:

**Bonfire Night** celebrations with an amazing fireworks display (November)

**Christmas Fair** with the famous Santa's Grotto & Christmas Trail (December)

**Summer Fete** (May)

**Parents Summer Ball** (not to be missed!)

The events not only enhance the school community, but also have a fundraising element for both local charities and to provide additional facilities for the school which would not otherwise be affordable. These additional purchases are not traditional school investments, but fun "extras". FOPS is made up of an enthusiastic volunteer committee and works closely with the school and administration. Communications are often distributed through year group parent representatives as well as the communications team of FOPS.

To get in contact please email [fops@oratoryprep.co.uk](mailto:fops@oratoryprep.co.uk)

# Being Healthy & Staying Safe

The school nurse maintains a medical database, recording each visit to the Sanitorium (medical room). They liaise closely with the school matron who, in their absence, deals with pupils' medical needs such as first aid and sickness. At least three members of staff in the Pre-Prep are trained in Paediatric First Aid and all other Teaching staff have basic first aid knowledge. Regular first aid courses are conducted for the whole staff, with an emphasis on sports injuries for those who take Games.

The school nurses are the main point of contact for parents on medical matters. It is essential that the Parent Information Form is completed and returned before a child starts at the school. Changes in a child's medical needs that occur after the form has been sent in should be forwarded to the School Nurses in writing.

Contagious or Infectious Diseases - The school must be notified if a child has a contagious or infectious disease. In such a case, the school will require that children are pronounced fit by their own doctor before being allowed to return to school. If in doubt, please consult the School Nurses.

Children must not return to school until 48 hours have elapsed following a case of vomiting or a stomach bug. Parents must inform the school if their child catches any kind of infectious illness during the holidays, especially if transmission has occurred while travelling or staying overseas.

Medication - please refer to the First Aid and Health Care Policy on our website,

Water bottles are part of the school uniform and all children must have one in school. In the summer months, sun hats and sun lotion should be worn. All items should be clearly named.

Smoking - The OPS has a no smoking policy throughout the school grounds.

## School Meals

The Oratory Prep School is a nut free school. All children eat meals provided by the school and children in Year 3 upwards serve themselves. There is a wide choice and on most days the children may choose from two hot dishes or an extensive salad bar. There is a selection of puddings, with fresh fruit and yoghurts always on offer. A vegetarian option is always available and we can cater for most dietary requirements. Menus can be found on our website.

## Safeguarding

Our Designated Safeguarding Leader is Mr Baker and our Deputy Safeguarding Leader is Mrs Spencer. The School fully implements the Children Act and its procedures, especially with regard to the safeguarding and welfare (child protection) of all pupils. All visitors to the school site are required to sign in at the Main Reception.

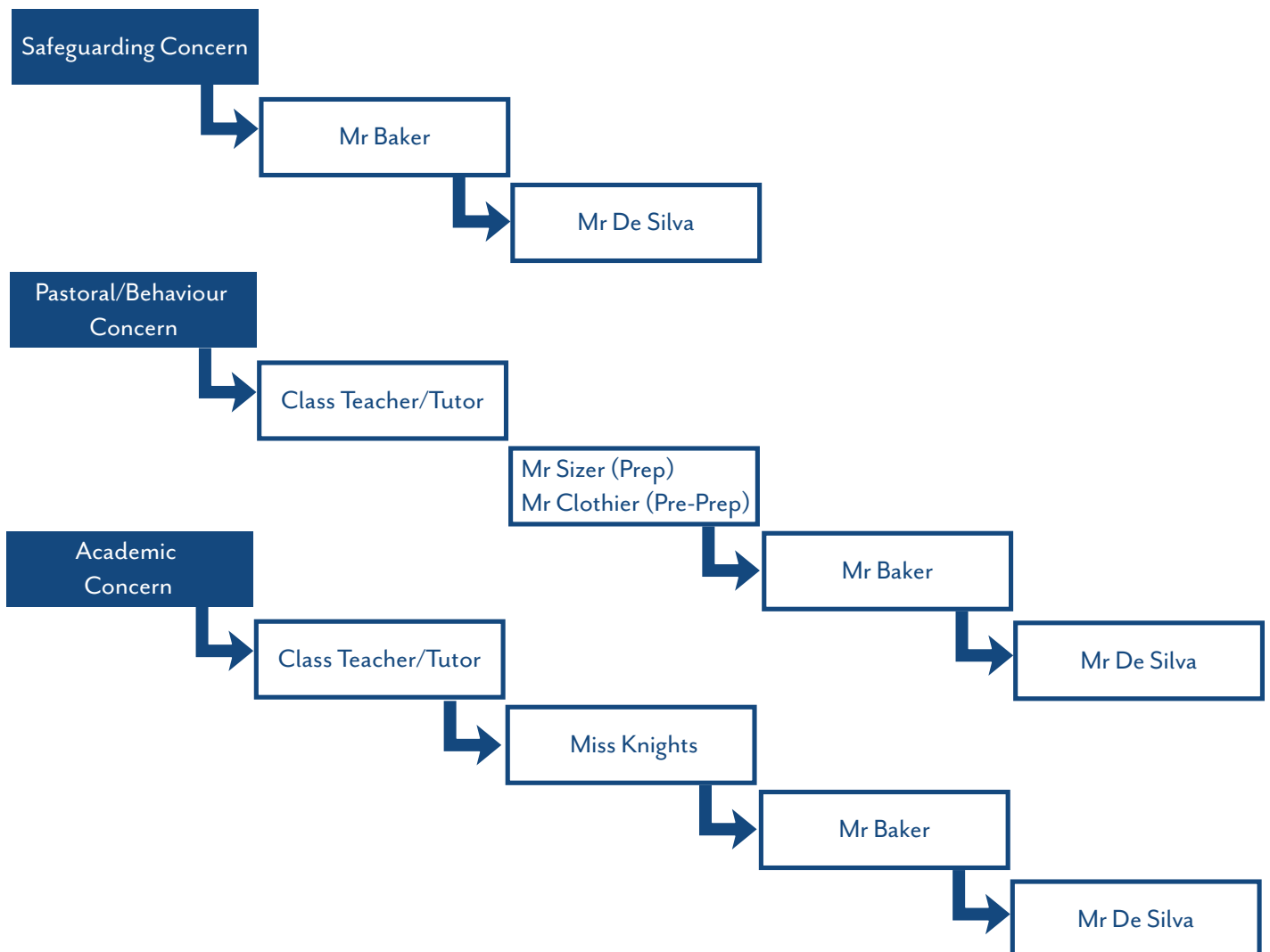
Photography at Events - we ask all parents/guardians not to share any pictures or videos of events and activities on social media where other people's children can be identified. We suggest that parents/guardians use their privacy settings to make sure only friends can see your photos online.

Please refer to the Safeguarding Policy on our website for further information.

# Senior Leadership Team

Staff Name	Roles & Responsibilities	Email Address
Mr Andrew De Silva	Headmaster	headmaster@oratoryprep.co.uk
Mr James Baker	Senior Deputy Head, Designated Safeguarding Officer	j.baker@oratoryprep.co.uk
Mr Chris Winterbottom	Deputy Head	c.winterbottom@oratoryprep.co.uk
Miss Claire Knights	Director of Studies	c.knights@oratoryprep.co.uk
Mrs Leanne Spencer	Head of Boarding, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer	l.spencer@oratoryprep.co.uk
Mrs Mia Suggitt	Admissions & External Relations Manager	admissions@oratoryprep.co.uk
Mrs Sara Parris	Business Manager	s.parris@oratoryprep.co.uk

## Procedure for communicating with the school



# Educational Visits

Our Curriculum can be enhanced by the use of trips and visitors. On occasion, there may be a need to charge for these trips.

Please note that trips are not compulsory and the school will continue to provide learning to those not attending. Boarding trips are also charged additionally.

# Chromebooks

Children in Year 3 upwards need a device as part of the school uniform. The school is committed to using Chromebooks because they fit in with our extensive use of Google Workspace for Education in the classroom and for homework. The device that we have chosen is a Lenovo 500e. It has a touch screen, converts to a tablet and comes with an inbuilt stylus which adds another dimension to the functionality of the device. Chromebooks connect directly to the internet and have no actual storage on them. This is great for security and also means that they last longer and slow down much less than a PC as they get older.

Being a school managed device we can ensure that it has all of the necessary resources that are needed for lessons and we can also monitor the activity of your child and safeguard them while online via our filtering system. The filtration system works on the device regardless of their location and will ensure they are safe at school and at home without the need of additional parental controls. This allows us to provide the best levels of support and safety for our children. The total cost of the device is £498.40 and includes an education licence (£40), a 3 year warranty and a level of insurance towards accidental damage. The school buys the devices in quantity which has meant that we have been able to secure them at a very competitive price and are not making a profit from the purchase. For further information, please contact Mr Baker.

The dimensions of the laptop are 2.5cm x 21cm x 29cm. Parents will need to buy a case for the device

# School Uniform & Equipment

School Uniform can be purchased from School Blazer at [www.schoolblazer.com](http://www.schoolblazer.com). All children are expected to wear the School's current uniform, not previous versions of it.

Our Second Hand Shop is run by parents who volunteer their time and to whom we are extremely grateful. You can email [2ndhanduniform@oratoryprep.co.uk](mailto:2ndhanduniform@oratoryprep.co.uk) to find out more. They will add messages in the weekly bulletin to inform you when the shop will be open. Please note:

All items of clothing, shoes and bags should be clearly labelled on the inside. Please remove any labels from the outside of the clothing. Watches should have the child's name engraved on the back. Children are not allowed to wear smart watches other than those with the most basic of functionality (for example step counting).

Children are required to have a Chromebook supplied by the school from Year 3. The cost of purchase is added to the bill in the first term of Year 3 or at the starting point of the child's entry to the school if above this year.

Mobile phones are not allowed in school or on residential trips unless under special circumstances which are granted by the headmaster (for example a medical need). If the child is a boarder they may bring in a mobile phone but it must be handed in to the boarding house and only used on the allocated evenings for calling home.

The school can take no responsibility for the loss of articles, but every attempt will be made to return items that have been clearly marked.

# Code of Conduct

It is recognised that the vast majority of parents already comply with these standards and we thank you for your support with this.

1. Staff should not be approached when they are not at work. Parents should always contact staff whilst in school. Staff have been instructed not to comment on complaints that are presented out of school. Staff should not be contacted via social media.

2. Complaints or concerns should be addressed to the person who was most heavily involved in the incident, unless it is of a very personal nature to do with that staff member, in which case it should be addressed to the Senior Deputy Head. The Headmaster should only become involved when the correct procedure has been followed, in order to allow a suitably neutral review of your concern if this is necessary.

3. Inflammatory comments or statements should be avoided and the tone should be courteous at all times – sarcasm, emotive and accusatory words such as ‘disgusting’, use of capital letters, exclamation marks or defamatory statements should not be included. Whilst the school appreciates the severity of concerns from parents and children, please remember that you have one version of the information that has caused you concern and therefore your information is incomplete and further investigation by the school will be needed. As we would expect, whole school decisions are made based on multiple factors known by the school.

4. Each complainant will represent their own views and should not seek to present themselves as self-appointed spokesperson for others.

5. Social media – concerns about the school should not be shared through social media. We would expect parents to model the behaviour we expect of our children – which would include talking to us if you have concerns.

6. We aim to deal with all complaints seriously and work to resolve them; please do not threaten with Governors (Bellevue), the Local Authority, ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate) or the Department for Education as a means to fast-forward your complaint.

7. Meetings will always be arranged where and when it is deemed necessary. Concerns around safety or child protection will be dealt with immediately otherwise an appointment will need to be made, in advance, to be seen by a staff member. Staff are not able to see parents who turn up without an appointment as their priority is teaching and learning and looking after the children in our care.

8. Please avoid approaching teachers before school (unless you have an appointment), as they need to prepare for teaching and learning. Teachers always escort the children outside at the end of the school day.

9. Any concerns and complaints received which do not comply with our expectations will be returned back to parents until the communications meet the expectations outlined above. Parents and carers who breach the terms will be asked to meet with the Headmaster. The above standards apply to written and verbal complaints and are also expectations held for staff.

It is vital that as a community no person should be made to feel anxious about their contact with others whom they meet every day on the school premises. Emotional, verbal and physical abuse can never be tolerated under any circumstance. Although not an exhaustive list the following are not permitted in the school environment

Shouting or aggressive behaviour towards another adult

Behaviour that demeans or belittles another person

Physical threats or bullying behaviour

Abusive or insulting language

Racist, sexist or homophobic remarks

Inappropriate posting on Social Networking sites that can be interpreted as bullying

Swearing

Hitting, punching, slapping or kicking

The school reserves the right to take any actions necessary to ensure that all members of the school community are not subjected to abuse.

It is an offence under section 547 of the Education Act 1997 for any person (including a parent) to cause a nuisance or disturbance on school premises.

School grounds are private property and parents are granted permission to be on the premises. That right can be removed in the case of abuse or threats to pupils, staff, parents and other members of the community. If permission is denied to a parent as a result of an infringement of the policy the staff member or parent has the right of appeal to the Schools Director, Mark Malley ([mmalley@blvue.com](mailto:mmalley@blvue.com)).

