

## Open Letter for students interested in joining Brockwood Park School

Dear Prospective Student,

Brockwood has a special atmosphere, arising from the beauty of the surrounding nature and the unique intentions of the place. This atmosphere is created by everyone who lives at Brockwood; through the silence of the Morning Meetings, the way people dress, talk, treat each other, do Morning Jobs, look after their rooms, and study. Each person who lives at Brockwood contributes to this atmosphere through their actions.

Over the years of the school's existence, a set of basic agreements have been developed that are meant to assist in creating and maintaining the special learning environment that we all find at Brockwood. As a prospective student, it is important to become familiar with the agreements, reading about the school on the website, or during the admissions process. Both you and your parents/guardians are asked to read and understand the agreements thoroughly, and sign and return a copy of the agreements before you decide to join the school. This document includes a bit more about the background and reasoning behind each of the agreements.

The agreements are being shared with you and your parents/guardians prior to coming to Brockwood and we ask you to consider them carefully, gain your own clarity, and express a concurrence with these agreements before deciding to join the school. You should join only if truly interested in the intentions and way of living expressed in the agreements. The agreements are to:

1. Begin the day at the agreed time with silence and be on time for all school activities
2. Assist in caring for the school and for each other
3. Care for your health, cleanliness and appearance
4. Adopt a vegetarian diet during the whole of each term and eat meals at agreed times and places
5. Develop a programme of studies that you apply yourself to
6. Respect wing times and agreements and remain in your bedroom at the end of the school day
7. Refrain from relationships that are exclusive and isolate you from others and from sexual behaviour that is inappropriate in a school context
8. Refrain from smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, using vape oils and other recreational drugs
9. Limit the use of electronic media to agreed places and times

### **Begin the day at the agreed time with silence and be on time for all school activities**

To begin the day with a sense of order and ease we start together at an agreed upon time with our Morning Meeting, a 10-minutes period of sitting together in silence. Spending time in stillness and silence allows each one of us to observe and learn about our own inner world, and better understand the movement of our thoughts and feelings. We ask that everyone arrive and leave the Morning Meeting quietly.

Everyone should be up in good time before the Morning Meeting to start the day on time and with energy. The Morning Meeting is followed by breakfast and then Morning Jobs. Everyone is expected to arrive for Morning Jobs ready to contribute fully.

We expect our students to be on time for all school activities including communal duties (rota, duty, morning jobs), classes and meetings (floor meetings, school meetings, etc.).

### **Assist in caring for the school and for each other**

It is important that we regard Brockwood as our home and as a place we are responsible to care for. This ranges from practical matters such as cleaning the house (morning jobs), washing dishes (rota) and assisting with duty, to taking an interest in and helping fellow students and staff whenever needed. Full and reliable engagement with these activities is expected of all students. We see care as a natural expression of awareness and sensitivity, and Brockwood encourages both staff and students to look beyond their self-centred concerns and to nurture this care.

### **Care for your health, cleanliness and appearance**

Taking care of one's health and well-being is an essential part of being at Brockwood and therefore we consider it important for students to eat well, get sufficient sleep and take regular exercise. Students are supported in this through our daily and weekly schedule: the regular sports and movement activities, the wholesome food provided all day, and the bedtime at the end of the day, are all put in place to support a healthy development. It is our intention to encourage students to develop their own sense of responsibility and care, which has implications for their health and well-being, as well as being aware of the unhealthy habits they may have acquired.

To encourage a healthy atmosphere and the breaking of detrimental habits, students are not allowed to consume coffee and caffeinated energy drinks at Brockwood, and the school strongly discourages the consumption of junk food.

Students will be responsible for washing their own clothes and keeping their rooms tidy and clean at all times.

We encourage students to reflect on their appearance and to understand the origin of the choices they make regarding clothing, jewellery and hairstyle; recognising that Brockwood is simultaneously a 'home', a place of work and an international school in which many cultural

norms have to mix harmoniously with a sense of order. Our dress code is 'tidy casual' and we ask students to follow the guidelines outlined below which reflect sensitivity to living with others and within the context of an international school and work environment.

- Extreme haircuts are discouraged and only dying in natural colours is allowed.
- Only studs and simple ear piercings (in the ear lobe) are allowed. Piercings elsewhere on the body are not allowed.
- Getting tattoos while being at Brockwood is not allowed.
- Being barefoot and wearing flip flops inside the main school buildings is not allowed. Other areas of the school (such as the Pavilions, the Study, parts of the West Wing and some classrooms) are designated shoe-free areas and shoes have to be removed before accessing those areas.
- Wearing hats, hoods and sunglasses inside the buildings is not allowed.
- Wearing articles of clothing with printed messages, pictures or graphics that are obscene or promote any illegal activity or violence is not allowed.
- Revealing clothing is not permitted. The main areas of the body apart from head, neck, arms, knees and lower legs should not be exposed.

### **Adopt a vegetarian diet during the whole of each term and eat meals at agreed times and places**

The school adopts a vegetarian diet out of a general respect for living things and how we treat them, the impact of our diet on the planet, and in keeping with the original intentions of the founders of the school. The school provides a well-balanced and varied menu to meet the nutritional needs of everyone within a vegetarian diet. For some this may require an adjustment to previous eating habits and as a result, we ask families who are unfamiliar with the vegetarian diet to do detailed research before joining the school so these adjustments will be minimal. Early in the year, the school organises introductory activities about (vegetarian) nutrition for new (or all) students in order to help them be aware of essential elements of a healthy, vegetarian diet. The Core Landing Programme as well as the Health and Movement classes provide ample information on nutrition to the young students, so they develop a sensitivity towards the impact of food on the body and mind.

We ask all students to eat all main meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner) in the school's Dining Hall together with the whole school community. Eating together gives us the opportunity to socialise, get to know everyone and develop a feeling for living in a community. Because of this, and for other reasons, having meals in student's bedrooms is not allowed. Exceptions to this agreement will be explained at the beginning of the year.

### **Develop a programme of studies that you apply yourself to**

The intentions of the Brockwood curriculum and approach to teaching and learning are for the student to develop a sense of interest, excellence and responsibility; to apply this sense to their academic studies and everyday conduct; to discover what they love to do; to infuse into their studies the question of right livelihood and their place in the world.

At the beginning of the school year, students develop their study programmes with the guidance and assistance of a student adviser. Together they will work on developing a balanced study programme. Once the timetable for the whole school is completed and courses begin, students are expected to commit to punctual attendance of classes, meetings, sports activities, study halls, presentations of their work. They will also be expected to follow through on their programme and commitments, and to complete the work required in order to get the best out of their educational experience here.

### **Respect wing times and agreements and remain in your bedroom at the end of the school day**

At the beginning of the year, the wing times (quiet time, floor check time, room time) and wing agreements will be explained to all students.

How we end the day is important at Brockwood. It is a time to bring the busyness of the day to an end so one can move calmly into a good night's sleep. Students need to support each other in this as it is all too easy to continue the impulse to engage with one another and in stimulating activities. Certain behaviours are required to keep a sense of order and respect for the fact that we live within the context of a school, which also exists within a larger context.

Students are not allowed to be outside of their wings after floor check time, and not outside of their rooms after room time. The reason for this is to respect the context of living in a school, for students and staff to have some quiet reflective time at the end of the day, to get adequate sleep, and to establish a healthy rhythm for the study/working week. The school also has a 'duty of care' which requires that we know where students are, that they are safe and secure after nightfall, and that they can show a mature sense of understanding and care.

As a mixed-gender school, we aim to create an atmosphere in which healthy relationships can occur without too many restrictions. Most school activities happen in mixed-gender groups, and during their free time, students can mingle freely in the common areas of the school (such as the Sitting Room and Cloisters Sitting Room). However, to protect the feeling of privacy in the boarding areas, boys are not allowed to visit girls' wings and vice versa.

### **Refrain from relationships that are exclusive and isolate you from others and from sexual behaviour that is inappropriate in a school context**

At Brockwood we question relationships that create a sense of exclusion from the community, overdependence on another and disruption to studies and community responsibilities. Engaging in any form of sexual intercourse, including apparent sexual intercourse and explicit sexual relationships, is not allowed at the school. In addition, no materials or pictures of an indecent nature are allowed at the school.

Learning about sexuality is an important part of life, education and self-understanding. Society and media often put a great emphasis on sexual imagery and behaviour in a way that may not be conducive to the well-being of a young person and to a healthy sense of sexuality. We would like our students to meet this part of life carefully and intelligently; questioning their own conditioning (ideas, behaviour, images) and considering all the issues carefully.

While the nature of the school set up does not support exclusive student couples and sexual relationships, we are not interested in repressing or condemning sexuality. We want instead to support students in inquiring into and learning about the nature of healthy relationships. As with all aspects of life, it is important to be willing to question our own drives and behaviour in relationships. In addition to learning about themselves, students must also keep in mind that they are living in the context of a boarding school. The school has a responsibility towards the wider context it exists in, including the responsibility towards parents and other aspects of the world outside the school.

### **Refrain from smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, using vape oils and other recreational drugs**

Much of the world is engaged in entertainment through the use of substances such as tobacco, drugs, vape oils and alcohol. Brockwood is not the place for this.

Drinking alcohol, smoking, vaping, and any form of involvement with drugs (buying, bringing in, passing on, consuming) are not allowed at the school, or on school-related trips, events or activities. Students need to take this seriously, come to their own understanding of this and have a real interest in a way of life that does not include them. Otherwise, they might come to Brockwood still expecting to engage in the use of substances which would severely affect not only their own experience here but the whole school, too.

At Brockwood we wish to encourage good health, clear thinking and the understanding of the self and we feel that the use of these substances does not support these aims. We feel that the school provides an opportunity for a lifestyle that is free, open and enjoyable in many ways. For us to preserve the special atmosphere of the school we must insist on these restrictions. Therefore, students must be interested in this lifestyle, agree to live this way at the school and to support others in living this way. We also expect from parents to support this whole-heartedly. For more details, please refer to the school's Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs Policy.

### **Limit the use of electronic media to agreed places and times**

As part of an all-round education, we feel it is important to question and discover the right place of technology and screen devices in our lives and at Brockwood. It is all too easy for these to take over and to inhibit other important ways of using our time and energy. Passive entertainment and the pressure of instantaneous social contact through social media (via laptops, smartphones, tablets, iPods, etc.) can be an obstacle to developing interests and talents, good relationships, study habits, community responsibility, attentiveness and

presence, and a sense of reflective quiet. The school provides ample access to computers and other devices for purposes of research, education and communication, while the use of personal devices is discouraged or restricted to limited times and spaces in order to support full engagement in school life, and to encourage students to make good use of their time and energy.

1. All personal screen devices brought to the school by students have to be registered before/at the start of the year (or whenever a new device is bought/obtained during the school year).
2. Smartphones (and smartwatches) will be collected on arrival day and should not be used by students anywhere on the campus. On Saturdays, students will have access to their smartphones for purposes of communication with family and friends.
3. Use of personal laptops and tablets will be restricted to exceptional cases which need to be requested and agreed upon before the beginning of the school year.

Movie watching on personal devices or (during the week) on school computers is not allowed. This includes series and generally the use of streaming services (Netflix, Prime, etc.).

For more details on the above points and on other devices, please refer to the school's 'Use of ICT, Mobile Phones and Other Electronic Devices' Policy.