



THE ROYAL BALLET SCHOOL

Boarding Principles and Practice (White Lodge)

Few, if any, of our parents would have considered sending their children to a boarding school had it not been for their outstanding abilities in classical ballet and, because the opportunity to come to White Lodge often arises quite late, most of our families have very little time to prepare for this huge change in family life. We, therefore, have to work hard to help parents understand our rules and procedures. It is sometimes difficult to explain the many ways in which living in a dormitory with a group can be so different from living at home in your own bedroom and this problem is often exacerbated by the heightened protective feelings, which many parents naturally have for their child at this time.

With these things in mind we try to prepare our pupils and their parents, before their arrival, and we have developed three ways of doing this.

- i) The 'New Parents Day' is held shortly after places have been finalised for the following year, usually early in May.
- ii) Before the end of the academic year a member of the PTA committee phones the parents to offer support and advice.
- iii) Each incoming pupil is assigned an existing White Lodger to act as their 'Guide'.

Entry to the school is by competitive audition; a timetable is published annually. It is also possible to consider individuals at other times, when spaces are available, and also to consider video evidence for pupils from abroad. A charge may be made for such a procedure. The school has no religious affiliation although we do have a local C of E minister who visits frequently and some of our pupils regularly attend services of other denominations.

Boarding accommodation at White lodge is separated into areas according to age and gender. Each area has a designated house parent who looks after the children for five days each week and there are also house staff who 'cover' these areas when the designated person is 'off duty'. The number of pupils in a room varies from 3 to 12.

It is our aim to generate self-confidence and independence in our pupils and to give them the skills to manage their own lives. This is done within a supportive and sympathetic framework of gradually increasing responsibilities and privileges.

Support is offered in two main ways

- i) Through the house staff, who have expertise in looking after their particular age and gender of pupils. (House staff remain in their areas and therefore pupils come under the care of different people as they move up the school.)



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- ii) By means of a personal tutorial system, through which each pupil is assigned a personal tutor, who they meet regularly. This tutor remains with them throughout their time at school and can offer academic support as well as acting as an advocate, when necessary.

It is vital that our students remain in close and supportive communication with their families and so we have regular 'events' at school designed to increase opportunities for contact between staff, pupils and parents. The school encourages parents to communicate with staff, particularly with the house staff and personal tutors, about issues of concern. We also have an active and supportive parent-teacher association, which, through fund-raising activities, sponsors events and purchases additional equipment for the pupils' leisure activities.

The health and welfare of the pupils is safeguarded by our medical team. A nurse is on duty each day and on three days a week she is supported by a physiotherapist. We also have an experienced and highly qualified counsellor who is available one day a week.

The position of White Lodge, in the centre of Richmond Park, means that our older pupils have the freedom to explore a rich and pleasant environment and to visit local shops in safety. The younger pupils are taken on escorted trips to the shops every weekend and we also provide a programme of ballet and theatre visits as well as other outings of an entirely recreational nature. Our recent outings have included 10 pin bowling, paintballing, kayaking, cinema trips, swimming, skating, theme park visits etc. Any reasonable request from the pupils is given careful consideration.

The in-school facilities are constantly improving, in spite of the shortage of space: All years now have common rooms for relaxation and these variously include a pool table, table football, games consoles and libraries.

We know we cannot replace home but we want our pupils to think of White Lodge as their 'second home'.

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