



2025 - 2026
Upper School
(Years 7-8)
General Information

Upper School (Years 7- 8)

Activities

Activities run from 4.05 – 5.00 p.m. Activities are run by Durston House teachers and external providers. The activities are mostly provided by external companies with some activities being undertaken by a member of staff. These activities are optional and further information will be sent to you from the Assistant Head, Co-Curricular.

After-School Care

After-School Care facilities, for the supervision of pupils whose parents are unable to arrange collection at the normal time, are provided from 4.05 p.m. - 6.00 p.m. An After-School Care Supervisor is specifically employed for this purpose. A register is kept by him/her. If pupils need to attend on an irregular basis, the School Office must be notified on the day. Pupils are collected any time until 6.00 p.m. from the Main School gate on Castlebar Road. There is a charge for this service. Pupils found uncollected outside the usual collection times are sent to After-School Care. Pupils are permitted to bring a small, healthy snack.

Assembly

Assembly occurs on Monday morning in Haven Green Hall. All Forms and staff attend. It is conducted by a member of SMT. At times, the school assembles as one; at other times different parts of the school gather together.

Beginning and End of the Day

Upper School Pupils arrive at School between 8.10 - 8.25 a.m. and enter through the main gate on Castlebar Road. On arrival, pupils make their way to West Corridor, where all bags, coats and school books are kept. Having gathered their books, files and stationery for lessons, pupils make their way to the form rooms, where they meet their Form Tutor for Form Time, and where registration is taken. Pupils are marked absent after 8.30 a.m. The first lesson begins at 8.30 a.m.

If a pupil arrives after 8.25 a.m., they must report to the School Office to be registered before sorting their belongings and going to class.

Lessons end at 4.05 p.m. on non-games days and at 4.30 p.m. on Games days. Pupils leave via the front of school and exit through the iron gates on Castlebar Road. Those attending After-School Care should make their way to Room 12 after collecting their things. A letter is sent to parents asking them to confirm details about drop-off and collection arrangements. The School Office should be informed of any change to these arrangements, even if only temporary.

Parents are asked to pick up pupils promptly and not to park illegally on or near crossings, in the bus stops in Eaton Rise and Castlebar Road, nor indeed across the driveways of local residents.

Breakfast Club

There is a Breakfast Club from 7.30 a.m. – 8.10 a.m. Breakfast Club must be booked in advance. Admission to Breakfast Club is through the gate at No. 24 Castlebar Road, between 7.30 a.m. and 7.45 a.m. There is a charge for this service.

Charities

Each year the school supports one or two main charities throughout the year. This charity work is coordinated by the Assistant Head, Co-Curricular, who is responsible for leading the development of pupil awareness and spearheading fundraising work. Durston House considers this charity work as an essential part of pupil participation in the life of the community, necessary for an individual's well-rounded education.

Communication

The school communicates administrative information to parents electronically, by email, text and alerts, via the school's messaging system and Parent Portal. This enables the school to communicate with individuals, classes, year groups or to the whole school. It also enables parents to reply and/or give consent online.

In some cases, the school continues to send hard-copy information to parents, by post or with pupils.

Parents are able to follow highlights of school life, the many activities and events that run throughout the year, by visiting our website or following Durston House on Social Media, including Facebook, Instagram, X & LinkedIn @durstonhouse

Curriculum Information

Parents can access the curriculum information on the school's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The information consists of a curriculum map for each subject, outlining the topics covered each year. In addition, there are curriculum notes specific to each year group. These give further detail of teaching methodologies, resources, requirements for prep and assessment arrangements.

Daily Breaks

Pupils are taken off site for daily breaks at Castlebar Fields. All four parts of the school go to the fields at different times of the day and are supervised by staff members.

Examinations and On-Going Assessment

Examinations for Year 7 take place once a year, in the first half of the Summer Term. Throughout the year, on-going assessments are carried out to aid teaching and learning. This is arranged subject by subject. Pupils' progress in the core skills is tracked using assessments at key points in the year.

In Year 8, mock examinations take place in November for those in 8st or 8nd. For those with scholarship examinations in the Summer Term, mock examinations take place in the second half of Spring Term. All pupils, apart from the scholarship candidates, will sit internal exit examinations in the first half of the Summer Term.

Form Tutors

Form Tutors are the first point of contact for pupils and parents. They are responsible in the first instance for the general welfare of the pupils in that Form. He/she is responsible for overseeing the Pastoral Care of a pupil, which includes their academic and personal development that year. The Form Tutor reinforces policies and guidelines, which are designed to create the ordered, calm and safe environment that is Durston House. He/she liaises with the Heads of Year or the Assistant Head Pastoral, registers the Form and disseminates any information or correspondence. Form Tutors coordinate the school reports for the pupils in that Form and write a general Form Report. The Form Tutor will help the Form to develop a collective spirit of loyalty, trust and support.

Formal School Occasions

Throughout the year, there are several formal school events that staff and pupils attend. The three major occasions are the Carol Service in the Autumn Term (Years 3-8 only), the School Concert in the Spring Term and the Prize Days in the Summer Term. As well, at the end of each term, all staff and pupils attend the Final Assembly on the last day, immediately prior to finishing for the school holidays.

Games

All pupils go to Games twice a week. On Wednesday afternoons, pupils will go to either Swyncombe or Castlebar. On Friday afternoons, pupils go to Castlebar for Games.

Games Pick Up

On Games days, all pupils should be collected at 4.30 p.m. Parents indicate, where appropriate, in the letter about drop-off and collection (see paragraph Beginning and End of the Day). Those participating in Games sessions at Castlebar, must be picked up from there on the relevant days. Pupils participating in Games sessions at Swyncombe must be picked up from school, unless walking home from Swyncombe. Parents are unable to collect their children directly from Swyncombe unless they have been watching them play in a home fixture.

On Games days, all pupils should be collected at 4.30 p.m. Parents indicate, where appropriate, in the letter about drop-off and collection (see paragraph Beginning and End of the Day). Those participating in Games sessions at Castlebar, must be picked up from the Main School on the relevant days. Pupils participating in Games sessions at Swyncombe can be picked up from Swyncombe, however the School Office should be notified in writing to ensure that Games staff can remind pupils to bring their school bags with them to Games.

Games – Fixture Information

All Fixtures will be published on SOCS with one term's notice. SOCS will display the timings and location of the fixture. Parents wishing to pick up their child from a fixture will need to indicate this on SOCS. Occasionally fixtures may need to be postponed or cancelled, this information will be updated on SOCS and it is recommended parents check the 'live' online calendar throughout each term.

Half Colours & Full Colours

Sport plays a major role in the lives of the pupils at Durston House, giving much enjoyment to all who take part, teaching them valuable life lessons in the process. Pupils participate in a range of sports throughout the year, not only advancing their levels of performance and skill, but also their commitment, passion, reliability, teamwork and attitude. To acknowledge these qualities, Full Colours and Half Colours are awarded to those who have displayed such traits during that particular term, or indeed during their journey through the school.

Half Colours usually go to pupils who have performed well during Games lessons, have represented the school team and have shown progress through determined effort and application, but are yet to reach the outstanding level needed for Full Colours. Pupils receiving Half Colours in Year 7 can go on to gain Full Colours in Year 8. In exceptional circumstances, children in Year 6 can achieve Half Colours.

Full Colours are awarded to pupils who have consistently applied themselves in a particular sport throughout their time at school. They will have achieved beyond normal expectations and represented the school at the highest level. Only pupils in Years 7 and 8 can earn Full Colours.

Houses

Pupils continue in one of the four Houses to which they were assigned on joining the school– Arundel, Conway, Warwick and Windsor. Whole House meetings are held throughout the term. Different activities occur, and inter-House cultural and sporting competitions are held. The Houses comprise children from all year groups. One member of staff is the Head of House, and one of the prefects from Year 8 is the House Captain. The Houses are also divided into House Vertical Groups which comprise pupils from Reception to Year 8 and are led by a Year 8 pupil. Each pupil will stay in their House throughout their time at Durston House. Each House competes against the others for the House Shield.

Instrumental Music Lessons

Pupils are able to learn one or more musical instruments. They are taught by visiting music teachers (VMTs), who enter into a contract directly with parents. A weekly timetable of lessons taught in school is prepared by the Head of Music. Throughout the year, there are opportunities to perform to the school and to parents. The Head of Music sends out a letter and a form to all parents during the Summer Term, on which requests can be made to receive a taster session in a particular instrument or other music tuition in the new academic year. Further information about instrumental tuition can be sought from the Head of Music.

Library

Pupils are able to borrow books from the School Library, and take Accelerated Reader Quizzes, during their designated Library Lesson under the supervision of their English Teacher or the School Librarian. All borrowed books must be returned via the Return Box so they can be checked before being returned to general circulation.

Lunches and Snacks

Pupils' lunches and snacks are provided by the school kitchen. There are a variety of choices available each day, and allergies and food intolerances are catered for. At lunchtimes, pupils with allergies wear a lanyard which will indicate their specific allergy to staff. Menus are published on the school website. Parents are sent information about menu choices before each term. Throughout the school, nuts, sesame seeds or food containing nuts are banned as there are some pupils who suffer from a serious allergy to them.

Music

The Music Department runs a variety of Ensemble groups, such as the Senior Choir, the Orchestra and other instrumental groups. These enhance the major, formal occasions in the school year through performance and pupils from Year 3 to 8 may be given the opportunity to perform. Auditions and rehearsals are held throughout the year.

Off Games

A pupil may be excused from Games by the Deputy Head, who must have received a letter (hard copy or via email) from parents requesting permission not to participate. A justifiable reason is necessary. The school's position is that if a pupil is too unwell to participate in Games, they should not attend school at all, except in the case of physical injury or recuperation after medical treatment. A pupil excused from Games remains at school under supervision, where they work on written tasks assigned by the Head of PE. They do not complete prep or exam revision at this time and may be collected at 4.05 p.m.

Office Opening Hours

The school offices are open from 7.45 a.m. until 5.00 p.m. each day during term time.

Outings & Trips

Throughout the year, pupils in all parts of the school are taken on Outings to museums, galleries, theatres, castles, battlefields, woodlands, rivers, ancient ruins, as well as places of religious significance. Places seen, data collected, information gathered, experiments carried out and pictures studied can be integrated into lessons on return to the classroom. Once a year, in the Summer Term, Trips Week takes place. Years 4 – 8 attend a residential trip, inspired by the curriculum, spending up to four nights away from home. Team building activities and the beauty and geography of the countryside deepen natural curiosity.

Parents Evenings

In the Autumn Term there is an Informal Parents Evening for each year group. This is an opportunity to meet socially, the teachers and other parents. There is a Formal Parents Evening for Year 7 in the Spring Term. For Year 8 the Formal Parents Evening will take place after the respective mock examinations. Parents will have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress with their Form Tutor and subject teachers.

Personal Accident and Dental Accident Insurance

All pupils are covered under the School's Pupils' Personal Accident (including Dental Accident) insurance scheme. There are no additional charges as the premiums are incorporated within the current fee structure.

Prep

Maths, English, Science, French and Latin prep will be formal weekly tasks, while Geography, History, TPR preps will be set every other week. Each prep is set by the subject teachers and intended to take around 40 minutes. Pupils can expect project-based work in Art, Music and Computer Science each half term. These are designed to prepare pupils for future lessons, or as an extension of what has been learned in the lesson.

Formal Prep is set by the teacher on the VLE and pupils are expected to log on to it every evening to check prep requirements. Prep is completed, 'marked as done' on the VLE and returned to the teacher the next day, or on the date set.

Reading is expected on a daily basis. Pupils should read for 30 minutes a day, and record this in the Pupil Diary.

Year 8 pupils are expected to spend more time engaged in examination preparation at particular times of the year.

Pupil Absence

If a pupil has an unplanned absence owing to illness or some unforeseen circumstance, parents telephone or email the School Office (in the morning) with an explanation (MainOffice@durstonhouse.org), before 9.30 a.m., on the first day of absence and make subsequent contact for each further day of absence.

Requests for any planned, future absence from school must be made by parents, in writing to the Deputy Head giving the dates and reasons for such absence. The office will send you a form to complete. They will consider the request and takes whatever action necessary. Absence for the purposes of exam revision is not permitted.

We do not believe that it is in the best interest of your child to miss school and discourage holidays and travel during term time. However, each application will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Pupil Diary

Each pupil has a Pupil Diary in which information to aid knowledge is held, and a daily calendar for note-making is available. Daily reading is recorded in this diary. The diary is also a means of communication between home and school, enabling notes from teachers to parents, and vice versa, to be passed on. It is expected that the Pupil Diaries are checked and signed by parents and Form Tutors daily.

Reports

Reports are sent to parents twice a year, at the end of the Autumn and Summer Terms.

Rewards & Sanctions

Anything that a pupil does that is clearly worth approval and encouragement, be it in their work or behaviour, is rewarded with a "Plus Point". At the end of term, special certificates are presented at assembly to those who have achieved the most points. For exceptional work or behaviour, pupils may receive a 'Red Letter' reward, or a Commendation from the Headmaster, which will be awarded at Assembly.

As part of the school's Behaviour Policy, there are a number of systems in place to promote positive behaviour whilst addressing misbehaviour. The School will work in partnership with parents to bring out the best in each child. Please see the [Behaviour Policy](#) for more details.

School Bags

All pupils in Upper School should use the school rucksack (large) and school sports bag, supplied by Stevensons (see Uniform tab on the school website for details).

School Calendar & SOCS

A calendar of events is published on the school website, on a termly basis. It is a comprehensive list of events and fixtures for the term, which parents are asked to refer to. We use SOCS for the School Calendar, Fixtures, and booking of After School Activities. Parents can access SOCS using their Parent Portal logins.

School Council

Pupils in Years 3-8 have the opportunity to have their voice heard, representing their peers as members of the School Council. Within each form, pupils can stand for election, at the beginning of the school year. Those who are successful attend weekly meetings where ideas are discussed and plans to develop school life are formulated. The School Council aims to enhance the Durston experience for pupils as well as help with fundraising initiatives.

Security

The security of pupils at the school is paramount. The gates at Main School are shut and electronically locked during the school day. If parents wish to enter the grounds of Main School, they should push the buzzer on the outside of the gate and wait until the School Office has identified them and let them in. Once inside school property, it is essential that all visitors report directly to the School Office on the ground floor, from where contact with staff, concerns or issues can be dealt with. Parents should not go directly to their child's Form Room or to any other part of the building. If they are visiting the school, parents are asked not to admit other visitors to the school property. Please advise such people to make contact with the School Office in the first instance. It is vital that the School Office is notified of any changes to drop-off and pick-up arrangements, as well as changes to personal and contact details that the school must know.

Term Dates

Dates are published well in advance. A copy of those dates is sent to all parents, and can also be found on the school [website](#). Parents are asked to respect the holiday dates and to avoid absence during term time.

Themed Weeks

Throughout the year, pupils in all sections of the school take part in themed weeks. In November, the pupils and staff focus on Anti-Bullying, reflecting on the nature and causes of bullying and how best it can be tackled at Durston House. In the Spring Term, Durston House recognises Children's Mental Health Week. Later in the year, two themed weeks occur: the Literature Festival and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Week. For both, events, workshops and speakers are organised to enhance learning in these areas of school life and to encourage pupils to pursue this learning beyond the curriculum.

Uniform

Details about Uniform can be found under the Uniform tab on the school website. All uniform should be clearly named. Lost, unnamed uniform is held at Main School and is displayed at the end of term, at the front of school. Alternatively, parents may search the lost uniform bins themselves at any time.

Pupils are required to come to school wearing their PE/Games kit on days that they have PE or Games.

The use of school uniform is monitored. Any persistent failure of pupils to have the correct school or PE/Games uniform is noted and parents will be contacted by the Deputy Head.

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

Pupils have access to a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) with their own personal login, where they can access set prep, catch-up or extension work, guidance and important curriculum information. Work can be sent directly by or to teachers online. Pupils must check the VLE daily.

Year Groups and Forms

Upper School comprises Years 7-8. Each year has a maximum of three Forms, each with approximately 16 pupils. Each Form has a Form Tutor who has day-to-day responsibility for looking after pupils and is the first point of contact for parents. Pupils have specialist teachers for all subjects. Year 7 are taught in their mixed ability Form Groups. Year 8 is taught in three classes: two mixed-ability groups and one for scholarship candidates. There is a Head of Years 7 & 8 who oversees pastoral care across both year groups.

Year 8 Responsibilities

A select group of Year 8 pupils are elected by their peers and staff to serve as Prefects. These pupils are entrusted with the responsibility of assisting and supporting staff in organising and caring for all pupils in the school community. Four of the Prefects are also House Captains, with the added responsibility of being the lead student representative in their respective Houses. This appointment is part of a broader array of leadership opportunities available to Year 8 pupils, alongside those roles allocated across the Middle School and Upper School.