

Parents' Guide to East Court School

“All Your Questions Answered”

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Appendix 1: Map showing the Sports Field

Introduction

The aim of this guide is to provide parents with helpful information that may not appear in the prospectus. It is based on many years of parental feedback about what information they would have found useful when their children started at East Court School.

Getting To School and the Sports Field

East Court School is easily accessible via the M2 into Thanet. The school is up on the cliff top between the Granville Theatre and King George VI Park. The school's prospectus has a map of the location. Another important landmark, however, is the Sports Field, which is some two miles away from the school. Many parents are not aware of this at first.

The map in *Appendix 1* shows the location of the Sports Field.

Train Run

There is a train run up to London Victoria every Friday evening. This is organised by parents, and any parents who wish to take part in the rota for this service are most welcome to join.



Parents chaperone the children on the train. The parent comes down to Ramsgate Train Station, meets the children (who are transported there by East Court staff), escorts them to London Victoria and delivers them personally to their parents or an agreed guardian. There can be any number of children - between 4 and 20. In the past, we have also had some transfer of children at Bromley South.

Shared Driving

The office staff are very happy to put parents in touch with others in the same area. This means that these parents can share the travelling by taking turns picking up and returning the children. This works extremely well, and those children who are weekly boarders have the option of returning to school on Sunday evening or Monday morning.



Taxi Runs

For the last 14 years, a taxi has collected up to eight children from East Court on a Friday afternoon, leaving school at about 5.00 pm and dropping children off at Brentwood and Harlow. The children are then collected from Brentwood and Harlow, and taken back to school on a Sunday afternoon, arriving in time for supper at 6.00 pm. The same driver, Don Gunn, has driven the children for all this time! The taxi is organised by a parent, the cost of which is paid to Don at the beginning of each term.

Airports / Flights

We use a number of taxi services, with CRB checked drivers, to transport boarding children to Gatwick and Heathrow. Our office staff are very happy to organise this service for children who travel abroad at half-terms and full-terms. Manston Airport, which is on our doorstep, has helicopter-landing facilities, and is developing long- and short-haul flights.



School Fees

East Court School fees are inclusive. We do not make extra charges for laundry, extra tutorial lessons, motor development programmes or speech and language therapy. The only “extras” likely to occur are if you choose to purchase your child’s stationery through the school, or take advantage of any outside activities or trips, such as those to theatres, cinema, zoos or a field trip to Dartmoor. We always ask your permission before charging for ‘trips’. Some visits are seen as part of the school curriculum and are included in your normal school fees.

Whilst East Court has Public Liability Insurance, like any other school, we do recommend that your household insurance cover the cost of any items such as laptops, or any other expensive item being brought to the school.

Please be advised that Dr. Scott, the Bursar, is very happy to discuss fees with you. We try to be as flexible as we can, but communication in this area is very important!



Curriculum and Other Matters

East Court School is totally focused on helping the dyslexic child, and we offer a structured multi-sensory programme for dyslexics in all subjects. We also plan our teaching around the dyslexic child’s learning style. In Science or Humanities, for example, we have differentiated worksheets. This means that we provide a framework for a child to write a few notes, or the results from an experiment, rather than having to copy text from the white / black boards or from dictation.



Dr Thomson will always be very happy to discuss the content of our teaching with you, and you are always welcome to read the detailed curriculum guide in our Staff Handbook.

You will know that we do not offer foreign languages.

Statemented Pupils

The majority of pupils at East Court School are funded privately, but there are a number of children who have Statutory Statements of Special Educational Needs. A small proportion of these are children who are funded by local authorities. The education and treatment of such children, in terms of curriculum and all the other aspects of school life, are no different to any other child. We do have some statutory obligations to meet, however; for example, each Statemented child will have a formal Annual Review with local authority representatives being invited. We are very happy to support parents, and we can provide advice to Local Authorities about the individual child.

Motor Development Programmes

Many parents are not initially aware that we offer motor development exercise programmes and speech therapy - in addition to our normal curriculum. All children at East Court are screened for fine (writing), and gross (balance and co-ordination) motor development difficulties. If it is needed, we can provide an individual programme for every pupil.



For those children with dyspraxic difficulties, we have a specialist teacher who undertakes exercises with the children. She also liaises with an occupational therapist and an osteopath who can come into the school to work with the child. All these services are part of our school curriculum - available at no additional cost.

Speech and Language Therapy

We have a Speech and Language Therapist on our staff whose main role is not to deal with speech *per se* (very few of our children have major speech difficulties), but to help with phonological difficulties, such as decoding. One of the key features with dyslexic difficulties is the problem of phoneme awareness; for example, being aware of the sound structure of the word, decoding words, splitting words into their sound units and blending them. Work by the speech therapist on phonology is undertaken on a one-to-one basis. All of our new children are screened in this area, and extra support on language development is given where needed. Again, this is part of our normal school curriculum, and there is no extra cost for this.



Medical Arrangements

There are regular visits by our School Nurse, should any of the children require medical attention or advice. There is also a local surgery that we use for any of our boarding children, should they need to be seen by a doctor. Our care staff are fully trained to administer medication to the children here at East Court School.



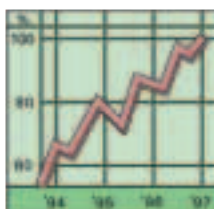
Reports and Evaluation

In the Christmas Term, we provide parents with written reports on all subjects. In the Easter term, we invite all parents to our Academic Open Day so that they can meet all their child's teachers. There is about a 'ten minute slot' per teacher for each subject. This enables parents to get a better feel for how their child is developing. We then provide a further set of written reports in the summer term. We are a small school, so the office staff are happy to arrange individual meetings with a teacher, should a parent have any concerns - or would simply like to know how their child is progressing. We prefer to work closely with parents.

Reading, Writing and Spelling Evaluations

On entering the school, all children are given a baseline measure on word reading and spelling, reading from text, phonetic coding and reading, speed of writing and a maths profile. We re-assess the maths on an annual basis, but the reading, writing and spelling are re-assessed in February and June.

All results are recorded individually so that we can evaluate our children's development. We plot each child's progress on a graph, and monitor it in relation to those dyslexic children who are not given help.



A summary of these results can be obtained from the office or Dr. Thomson. Please ask for the ‘Monitoring Children’s Intelligence and Educational Attainments’ document. This shows, for example, that children, on average, come to East Court School at ten years old, three years behind on their reading, and leave East Court School, on average, at thirteen years old, with their word reading at their age-level. This represents six years reading progress in three years. A detailed breakdown of this is available and is also published in peer-reviewed journals.

The School Day

You might find it useful to know the structure of the school day. Parents of day pupils often find this particularly helpful.

Boarders get up in the morning from around 7.00 am onwards, and have their breakfast at 7.50 am. There is a little time for play after breakfast before the school day commences at 8.40 am with Assembly, when Dr. Thomson gives out stars, credits and green cards. At 9.00 am, the whole school splits into small reading groups of mixed age, and teachers listen to the children read. (We are always looking for parent volunteers to help with this.) Reading is followed by ‘Brain Gym’. We then have two lessons, a twenty-minute break at 10.40 am, then three lessons until lunch break at 12.50 pm - which is one hour and ten minutes long. Half of the lunchtime is for play, and the other half is for eating. We then have two further lessons until a twenty minute afternoon break at 3.40 pm. Finally, there is one hour of lessons or other activities. On Monday, this hour is occupied by Clubs (see separate section) and, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, by extra tutorials or private study (homework). Wednesday and Friday afternoons are fully taken up with Games (see Games and Activities, below), Sports and PE. Our school day finishes at 5.00 pm, when day pupils leave for the day (see Day Pupils, below).

Boarders then go to their dormitories and change into their casual clothes, with help from care staff. The children then have fairly unstructured free

time until the main meal of the day at 5.45 pm. Then, boarding children have evening activities (see Boarding section, below).

Games and Activities

Many parents have commented that they were not aware of the range of activities, clubs and sporting facilities at the school until their children joined.



Two afternoons a week are devoted to Games at the school. These can be either at the school on the Astroturf or up on the games field, which is some two miles away (see Map for location). We share the Pavilion with Broadstairs Cricket Club from whom we lease the games field. This is for our use, whenever we wish, as we have a long-term lease with the Cricket Club. The only restrictions are when they have cricket matches in the summer.

During the Christmas term, our main sport for the boys is Soccer, and the girls play Netball; in the spring term, the boys play Rugby, and the girls can play Lacrosse, Hockey or other sports; in the summer, the boys play Cricket, and the girls play Rounders. Occasionally, the girls join in with the boys' sporting activities, if they wish. We also participate in athletics in the summer. In all cases, we have an under 13's team and an under 11's team who play against local independent schools in matches and tournaments. We also join the Preparatory Schools' Athletics Tournament every summer.

A number of our children are very keen on Games, but there are also those who do not enjoy Games at all, and we do try to encourage them with alternatives. As well as the Games programme, we have clubs for an hour (between 4.00 pm – 5.00 pm) on Mondays, which include swimming,

badminton, chess, art, woodwork, knitting, computer games, tennis, golf and a number of other clubs, depending on the season and the number of children.

We also offer individual music lessons, which usually take place in the evenings. These can be organised via the office. Currently, we are also holding fencing, woodwork and art clubs in the evenings. Our day pupils are also welcome to join these activities.



Please see the section on boarding for other activities that take place in the evening and at the weekends.

Boarding

Many of our children are weekly boarders, but we also cater for full boarders. (A useful leaflet on boarding is available from the office).

Please be reassured that we do not board children if they are unhappy. Do not hesitate to contact Dr. Scott, who is our Head of Care, or Dr. Thomson if you have any concerns at all. Please be reassured that no matter is too small for us to be concerned about. Our aim is to develop a home from home and to support the boarding experience in every way.

Since disorganisation is a marked characteristic of dyslexia, we encourage our children to learn to organise themselves as much as possible; for example, they will learn to make their own beds, dress themselves, hang up their clothes and tidy their areas.



Please do have a careful look at our clothing list, and note that clothes must be labelled, both school uniform and casual clothes, as they can easily be lost.

Many parents are unaware that the children's clothes are washed at the school, and that we are very happy for items of clothing to remain at the school over both the Christmas and the Easter holidays. All that need to be taken home during the holidays are clothes needed for that period. Big trunks and large suitcases can be left at the school, along with the children's clothes and their belongings.

Some of the items on the clothing list may seem odd, but they are needed for a purpose; for example, different trainers are needed for outside activities, Astroturf and indoor use around the school. If you have any queries, please do contact our housekeeping staff. They are also happy to help with lost property - and we find there is a lot of this, since dyslexics have working memory difficulties!

Inevitably, children will be learning to live and sleep in dormitories, and adjustment may be difficult for some children. We can usually accommodate children's wishes for bunks (top or bottom), single beds and being in dormitories with friends - as long as we have reasonable notice. Patience is needed when a child's wishes are not met immediately. There are many children to keep happy, and we do our very best.



Regarding activities in the evening, older children are expected to complete homework for two or three evenings a week. Group 6 children complete homework two nights a week and Group 7, three nights a week. These sessions are necessary for our children to get used to the idea of completing work independently - although an academic staff member supervises each session. This homework is in addition to general private study, which is done during the school day, with tutor support.

Otherwise, there are lots of organised activities around the school in the evenings; for example, we have the Astroturf (floodlit in Winter) for soccer or other games, televisions and DVD's, laptops, art or games clubs and supervised trips to the park or beach. We do not encourage the children to watch television every day, and all children have to choose an activity rather than wander around doing nothing.



Following the main meal at 6.00 pm, activities are organised, and then we have a drink and biscuits just before 8.00 pm. At that time, the younger children go up to bed, and the older children carry on with their activities or can stay downstairs. Children are read to, or listen to their personal stereos, depending on what each dormitory decides to do. We encourage each dormitory to have a quiet time, and each dormitory has at least one member of care staff to supervise it. Lights out are from 8.45 pm to 8.55 pm, depending on the age of the children in the dormitory. Please be reassured that cleaning teeth, washing hair and all the other domestic aspects of the children's welfare are taken care of on a regular basis.

We are very happy for full boarders to bring a reasonable number of toys, including cuddly toys (as even our 13 years old boys will have these!), models, War Hammer games and Walkmans – all clearly labelled, please! If in doubt, please talk to Dr. Scott or Dr. Thomson.



Day Pupils

Day pupils arrive at school at around 8.30 am in time for our assembly at 8.40 am. We are, however, very happy for children to arrive earlier than this, if it is convenient for their parents, and some day pupils come for breakfast. Again, although we officially finish at 5.00 pm, we are very happy to accommodate parents who need to collect their children a little later, and our day pupils can sometimes stay for an evening meal. This can be organized through the office.

There is also a day pupil notice board which shows details about outings and sporting fixtures. Parents need to look at this regularly; for example, there may be days when certain items of clothing are required. At present, the day children change into sports kit on Wednesday at lunchtime, and all pupils wear their sports kits all day on Fridays.

Day pupils are allocated a locker in a dormitory, according to their age. This is where they can safely leave games and other kit. We do, however, expect day pupils to take their games kit home regularly for washing.

If a day pupil makes friends with one of our boarding children, we are only too happy for the boarder to visit the day pupil at home (with permission from the boarder's parents), or, for example, to go for a pizza or spend the weekend with the day pupil.



Communication with home including mobile phones

We encourage children to communicate with home as much as possible. Parents are very welcome, not only to visit the school and observe sporting fixtures, theatre presentations and any other activities going on at the school, but also to take the children out for a meal or just to say “hello”.

All children are given a school e-mail address which they will be taught how to use within the first couple of weeks of joining the school. They will be helped with sending and receiving e-mails if they have any difficulties with this.

We are also very happy to receive fax messages, which we will pass on to the children at break times, and help them to read, if necessary. We also allow our children to use the fax machine if they want to send a drawing or picture to you.

We are happy for children to receive telephone calls at the school, but would ask that you let the office know when this is going to happen so that your child can be ready to speak to you.

Nowadays, the most popular method of communication is by mobile phone, and we do allow children to bring their mobile phones to the school. For obvious reasons, we do not allow them to be taken into class during the school day, but, at the end of the day, all boarders can take their mobile phones out of a secure cupboard. All the children’s mobile phones must be labelled and have charging units (also labelled) so that we can ensure that the batteries are always properly charged. We also recommend that parents agree certain times of the week for talking to their children on their mobile phones. We find one or two calls a week, at an agreed time, work very well. Parents should make sure that the care staff are aware of these arrangements, where appropriate. Parents should also bear in mind

their child's timetable. For example, the children take part in after-school activities, and between 7.00 and 8.00 pm is homework/play time.

We cannot always answer the telephone in the office during the evening as activities with the children take priority. There is, however, an answer phone machine, which is checked regularly, and calls are answered as soon as possible. We recommend that you do not call after 8.00 pm, when the care staff are settling the children down for their quiet time.

Laptops

As the prospectus describes, we have a ten-stage typing programme at the school. There is, however, no point in saying to dyslexics "use a laptop", if they don't have reasonably good keyboard skills. So, we suggest that you do not purchase a laptop for your child until they reach Stage 4 or 5, at which point, they are able to touch-type the basic keys reasonably well.

Many of the older children use laptops around the school, both in classes and for their homework / private study. The whole school is networked on computers so that children can access their work anywhere around the school. All classrooms, and even some landing areas, have access plug points to access the school's intranet. This means that a child can download work for tutorials, and many children can save their work straight onto the hard drives on their laptops.



The Internet and e-mail can be accessed from all of these points. All e-mails come through the school system, but please be reassured that all our Internet connections are screened via a procedure that is used by boarding schools all over the country. Inappropriate material will not find its way through to a school computer or laptop.

Sometimes, children use their laptops for games, but we operate a policy that the games need to be age – appropriate. If necessary, Dr. Thomson

will look at the games, and he will make a decision based on the game's rating and what the game is all about.

Parents must make sure that their household insurance covers the laptops, and that the children have a sturdy case for their laptops that will resist damage, if dropped. Some children have backpack-type cases if they are carrying around heavy laptops. Parents should bear in mind that the children do not need large, heavy and expensive laptops with an extra special video card for games. On the one hand, a parent may well be happy with this, but the laptop does have to be carried around by the child. Parents should also be aware that laptops can be charged around the school, and we also have a charger unit cupboard, which allows us to charge laptops overnight. We do not allow laptops in the dormitories overnight.



Classroom Requirements

Children can bring their own stationery from home or, alternatively, purchase it through the school office. You may be aware that children's work is kept in a ring folder and filed in the classroom where the subject takes place. The folders are colour coded, and we provide all the folders for the children. Your child will need a set of basic stationery (pen, pencil, rubber, ruler and some coloured pencils), ideally in a pencil case which has ring binder holes. This allows the child to put their pencil case into their private study folder, which is also a ring binder. There is no need to go over the top with stationery as the school does provide what is required. The child's English teacher, who will be happy to advise, can answer any questions about, say, whether a pen should be an ink pen or another handwriting pen. The older children use ink fountain pens, but some children with dyspraxic difficulties may find them very difficult to use.

Psychological & Assessment Service

Many parents are not aware that East Court, as well as being a school, also runs a Psychological and Assessment Service. Dr. Thomson is the Clinical Director of the service, and a number of Assistant Psychologists, including some of our teachers who are qualified Psychologists, will undertake the testing. This enables diagnostic testing for dyslexia and some other educational difficulties, both for children and adults.



This is a service that you are very welcome to use for yourself, other members of your family or even friends, and many of our parents also use this service to update their child's Educational Psychologist's report in readiness for their next school. Please contact the office for further information, including fees, for this independent service. We offer the normal cognitive psychometric and educational tests, and, also, we can provide detailed descriptions of what the child / adult might need for future education. As well as this Educational Psychologist's Report, we can undertake screenings in speech and language, dyspraxia and dyscalculia.

School Handbook, Policy & Guidance Documents

The DfES and other organisations require us to have a detailed guide to all our policies. This is contained in our school handbook, which may be perused in the office. You may want to look, however, at any or all of the following policies (copies are available on request):

- Aims and Philosophy of the School.
- Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Health and Safety Policy and Procedures.
- Curriculum (including general aims and policies, and also a detailed guide to the curriculum for all of the subjects.
- Child Care (including policies, statements and targets).

- Child Protection Procedures.
- Complaints Procedures.
- Discipline (including our policy, specific guidelines, rules and sanctions).
- Policy Statement on Bullying.
- Boarding Policy.
- Monitoring Children’s Attainments and Intelligence (see also reading, writing and spelling evaluations earlier in this guide).

Staffing

East Court has 48 employees. They include 14 teachers, 2 L.S.A’s, a nurse, a Speech and Language Therapist, 2 Assistant Psychologists, 10 care staff, an accredited BACP counsellor and many site, housekeeping and kitchen staff.

Brief guides and mini C.V’s of our staff are available from the office.

Motivation: Stars, Houses, Credits, Cards and Satis’

The children will soon come back with stories about stars and the credit system at the school, so here is a guide to how the system works.



Stars

Stars are given for a child’s academic work, judged against his or her own standards. A child who, for example, has not been able to write anything before will get a star for writing a couple of lines, while older children may get stars for writing a two-page essay. The stars are given for academic work - which is put in the ‘star tray’.

At the following morning’s assembly, Dr Thomson will comment on this work, and the children who have got stars will get a round of applause. The numbers of stars are accumulated, and the top ten scorers at the end of the term each receive a certificate.

Houses

All the children are put into houses (Angles, Jutes, Romans, Saxons and Vikings). Each House has two academic staff tutors and meets every week. The main purpose of this meeting is to go through credits (see below), and also to act as circle time. Children can bring up any concerns or worries, and can discuss issues around the school.

Houses also form the basis for various annual competitions; these include the athletic competition, quiz and the famous East Court Sandcastle Competition.



Credits

Credits are a form of encouragement and motivation, and they are given to children for good behaviour and a positive attitude. Children carry a credit sheet, which is initialled by academic and care staff every time a child gets a credit. The credits can be used for buying sweets and chocolate (approved low-additive types) and stationery. They can also be saved up: a hundred credits equals £1; three or five hundred credits equals special trips, such as to a pizzeria or tenpin bowling at the end of the term.

Credits also form the basis for House meetings. The names of the top two children and the winning house are read out each week, and there is a competition for which House has the highest number of credits at the end of term. The winning house watches a video on the last day of term, instead of doing lessons. This is most prized!



Cards

Children can get four cards: green, blue, yellow and red. A green card equals three credits. A note on the card indicates why it was awarded. It is signed by the member of staff, and then read out in assembly. A yellow card, on the other hand, deducts three credits. This is given for

inappropriate behaviour, such as calling out in class after being warned three times. Again, a comment is noted, and the card is read out in assembly. A blue card equals three green cards, and is awarded for exceptional behaviour over a long period of time. A red card equals three yellow cards and can only be given by the Principal or Deputy Head. These are to be avoided at all costs!

Satis

Some of your children may come home saying that they have been given a “Satis”. This is a lesson-by-lesson monitoring system for your child’s behaviour. There are various forms of Satis, most of which are intended to be encouraging: for example, a Satis may focus on getting down to work quickly or putting your hand up before you ask a question. The teachers’ assessments in ticks over a day can earn credits. Other forms of Satis involve comments made by teachers, and the child then meets the Deputy Head or Dr. Thomson daily to reflect on the comments.

Sanctions

We feel that discussion with the children and understanding their needs within the general framework of the school will maintain good behaviour and focus. In particular, we feel that the above system works very well. There will be, however, a clear series of more serious sanctions if a child still continues to behave in an unacceptable manner. Initially, a red card will be issued and parents informed. The next stage is that parents are invited to school for a discussion, with their child, about improving his or her behaviour. An internal suspension may follow, which may be for one or two days, where a child is excluded from class and is set work on their own. The next stage would be an external suspension, where a child would be asked to leave the school for a certain number of days. The final stage would be expulsion from the school. We are reluctant to do this, but, when it has happened in the past, it has been because we needed to protect children from any others who might have become aggressive or prevented pupils from working. As mentioned earlier, this is very rare, but it is important for parents to understand clearly our sanctions and procedures.