

Why weekly board?

By Dr Gareth Lloyd, Head, Malvern St James Girls' School

- **Weekly boarding has been growing fast** as parents and pupils realise the advantages for the whole family of **splitting the week into focused family and work time**.
- Weekly boarders arrive at school on Monday morning and go home on Friday evenings.
- For parents it means that **during the working week, they can be fully present in business mode, and at the weekend, they can be fully present for family** and spending undistracted quality time together. This can help minimise that familiar frazzled feeling that can start to engulf us as we try to juggle the competing needs of modern life.
- **Then there are the economics:** whilst there is, of course, a cost for weekly boarding, it **minimises some of the other household bills** including petrol, food, utilities, and the **unquantifiable lost hours of productivity**, overseeing homework, dropping off and picking up, making nutritious meals, being a chauffeur service, and so on ... any parent knows how this adds up. According to MoneyFarm, the financial planning website, the cost of basics for a teenager living at home (food, heat, lighting, electrical and travel) is **£748 per month. This excludes additional costs like entertainment, and childcare/babysitting which will still be required for young teens.**
- For girls, weekly boarding means that they can take **ownership of their working week, using the time to balance academic, enrichment and social interests**. How they do this will depend on their age, but for all of them it gives a **greater degree of independence** and satisfaction.
- For younger girls, this means that **prep (homework time) will be supervised with an adult who will be able to help them academically, and encourage them to use their time effectively**. This will be followed by plenty of time playing games or an activity such as baking or crafting, having dinner together and fun socials like karaoke.
- Older girls get plenty of time to **make the best use of study facilities including the Library which is open till 9pm every weeknight, and the gym (also open till 9pm)**, as well as being able to **work collaboratively** on projects with friends, **join in evening enrichment activities** like Enterprise, debating, or academic lectures and Somerville Suppers, as well as just being able to **spend downtime with friends**, shooting the breeze and dreaming of the future (it's surprising how many good ideas and ambitions are formulated this way!).
- For girls who have **team commitments like sport, drama or music** where individual and group practice are important – whether this is for fun or for GCSE or A Level qualification – being able to have **this extra time can be a game-changer**. And for parents, it removes the need to plan late pick-ups from school: a win-win for all concerned.
- **Friendships flourish in the boarding environment:** girls get to know each other better and form bonds with their own peer group, as well as being mentors for younger girls and being mentored by the older ones. This **sisterhood concept** is what all-girls' is really about – making everyone feel that they belong, that they are valued, and that they all have something unique and significant to offer.
- Spending **time outside of school with friends face-to-face, rather than via messaging apps** such as Tik-Tok, FaceTime, BeReal etc is also a really important part of growing in social confidence in an age when more and more children are showing anxiety around real-life personal interaction.
- **For busy parents, weekly boarding allows a more balanced working week**, where they can spend time before or after the office focused on their wellbeing and health, whether that

means hitting the gym, laying out their yoga mat, or nurturing friendships. Create the space for your resolutions to really happen: most of us acknowledge that we parent more effectively when we get time to meet our own needs as well as everybody else's.

- At MSJ, girls can board from Year 3 upwards and we pride ourselves on being a **home from home**. Our boarding team are tip-top from **our boarding graduates (recent university leavers who bring lots of fun, energy and the ability to help with academic studies)**, to our **very experienced Housemistress and House staff team who are experts in helping teenage girls** navigate all aspects of life with patience, good humour, and wisdom. You can rest assured that your daughters are in the best possible hands.

Please enquire about weekly boarding through our Director of Boarding – Anouska van Ravenstein - on ravena@malvernstjames.co.uk