

ASCHAM BOARDING BULLETIN



From the Head of Boarding

Welcome for 2026 – we hope you enjoy reading the first edition of our Boarding Bulletin for this year. This format is a return to a pre-covid communication style. You'll receive Bulletins throughout the year with contributions from myself, our Year 12 Head of Boarding, Alex Ryan, Boarding staff and other members of our School community. This time around, we hope you enjoy getting to know our Boarding staff better.

–Allysia Heness Pugh

The Term Ahead

Wed 18 February | [Year 9 Parent Information Session](#) | [Academic Buoyancy](#)
Fri 20 February | [Books and Breakfast with Mick Elliot](#)

Mon 23 February | [Year 12 Parent / Teacher / Student Interviews](#)
Fri 27 February | [APA Pre-loved Uniform Store](#)
Sun 1 March | [Chinese Lunar New Year Lunch](#)
Fri 6 March | [Boarder Parent Committee Meeting](#)
Fri 6 March | [APA Annual Cocktail Party](#)
Sat 14 March–Sun 15 March | [Year 11 Country Weekend in Harden | Parents only](#)
Wed 25 March | [Rostrum Voice of Youth](#)
Fri 27 March–Sun 29 March | [Moana Jr. | Junior School Musical Performance](#)
Mon 30 March | [Year 7 Parent/Teacher/Student Interviews](#)
Mon 30 March | [Music Twilight Concert #1](#)
Wed 1 April | [APA Pre-loved Uniform Store](#)
Wed 1 April | [Term 1 Ends](#)

Meet our Boarding Staff



- Duntrim House Staff

Kylie Bickerstaff | Head of House

Kylie joined Duntrim as Head of House in September 2024 having previously worked as a Year Coordinator and Assistant Head of Sport at MLC Burwood for the past 15 years.

Kylie has a strong pastoral background and is excited by the atmosphere of positivity, respect and genuine community that Boarding creates.

Kylie has spent 25-plus years in the education space – longer if her start in sports coaching at the age of 12 is counted. Kylie gained her Bachelor of Education majoring in International Studies and was able to study abroad in Manchester, UK. Kylie spent 11 years in Sri Lanka as a Head of Stage in a Primary School before returning to Australia.

When not at work, Kylie enjoys time with her son, Hugh, and their dog Max. She has many passions – music, history and travel – recently purchasing a camper van to mark a milestone birthday, and is looking forward to travelling across Australia in between her overseas trips. Kylie is also currently studying her Masters in Child and Adolescent Mental Health.

Resilience, courage, acceptance and responsibility are personal values that Kylie adheres to in everything she does, and has been fortunate in her career and personal experiences because of this. She looks forward to continuing to promote these values at Ascham.



- Duntrim House Staff

Holly Bucknell | Boarding Coordinator

Holly is from Grenfell, Central-West NSW. She was a boarder at Kinross Wolaroi in Orange before finishing schooling at Tara. Holly spent her Gap year living in London before returning to Sydney where she is currently studying Forensic Science majoring in Crime Scene Investigation at the University of Technology Sydney. She has experience as a Residential Assistant at the Sancta Sophia College, at the University of Sydney.

She hopes to join the NSW Police at the completion of her degree and eventually become a Forensic Investigator.

Holly enjoys going for coastal walks, swimming at the beach and cooking. Having boarded for 6 years, Holly joined the Boarding community at Ascham in January 2024 and has enjoyed spending time with Duntrim girls.



- Duntrim House Staff

Aline Fritzen | Boarding Coordinator

Aline was born in Brazil and moved to Australia in 2017, joining Ascham in February 2023. As an only child, moving frequently with her father's job, Aline had to find a way to make new friends often. Aline can definitely relate to the boarders' feelings of leaving the safety of home to face new challenges of living at school.

Aline holds a Bachelor of Chiropractic with eight years of experience running a chiropractic office in Brazil. Aline was part of a multi-disciplinary team that offered health care and health promotion to vulnerable young people, and it was a rewarding experience having the opportunity to contribute to improving the wellbeing of those teenagers.

Promoting healthy choices and wellbeing was always the steering wheel of her practice, and after moving to Australia she felt she could change careers without changing her life purpose. With that in mind, she went back to university, and completed a Masters in Business and Administration, and a Masters of Public Health.

The opportunity of working now as a Boarding Coordinator with senior boarders allows Aline to practice her skills and knowledge and repeat the wonderful experience she had in the past working with teenagers.



- Duntrim House Staff

Judith Valisno | Boarding Coordinator

Judith started as a Boarding Coordinator at Ascham in 2021, having previously worked in Boarding at St Scholastica's College, Glebe and MacDonald College, Strathfield. Judith completed a Bachelor of Arts in Organisational Communications at the University of the Philippines and a Master of Arts-Education at Ateneo de Manilla University. Judith also holds a TESOL certificate. She has also enjoyed postgraduate studies in Early Childhood Research, Human Resources Management and Computer Studies.

Her passion for guidance, teaching and counselling has spanned over 10 years, working with primary and high school students as a teacher in the suburbs of western Sydney, focussing on preparing developmentally appropriate activities and developing organisational and social skills.

In Boarding, Judith enjoys the opportunity to work hand in hand with students, parents and teachers, helping to guide young minds in developing critical thinking skills, to be proud of their talents and to uphold integrity.



- Macintosh House Staff

Simone Brown | Head of House

Simone joined Ascham in January 2025. With a background in Mothercraft and Early Childhood Education, Simone has held several interesting and varied work roles, including school administrative officer, professional tennis coach, lecturer, and journalist (writing parenting columns for a daily newspaper). After many years working in child-related fields, Simone established her own Early Childhood Consultancy business, offering individual developmental advice to families with young children.

However, her most rewarding role was when she was appointed Student Wellbeing and Homestay Coordinator at the prestigious Tanya Pearson Academy, a world class provider of dance education. Simone spent almost 10 years at TPA in multifaceted roles, including managing daily operations, organizing major concerts and productions, and interviewing and matching local provider families with visiting regional, interstate and international Homestay students. Here, she gained an extensive knowledge of adolescent development in an elite setting, allowing her to support and guide students, predominately girls, on their own individual journey.

Simone has an interest in sports and performing arts, and has a 19-year-old daughter, Maddison, who is a full-time classical ballet student currently studying and training overseas.

As a long-time North Shore resident, Simone has embraced exploration of the Eastern Suburbs, especially its coastal walks and beaches, and looks forward to many more adventures in 2026 and beyond.



- Macintosh House Staff

Jade O'Kelly | Boarding Coordinator

Jade joined Ascham in June 2025. She is a passionate and dedicated marketing professional with a strong background in customer service, coaching, and community engagement. Having grown up in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs and attended school locally, she knows the area back to front and is deeply connected to the community. Jade recently graduated from the University of Wollongong with a Bachelor of Communications and Media, where she developed a strong foundation in digital storytelling and audience engagement. She brings valuable experience from coaching netball at MLC and working at Walt Disney World in Florida, where she was responsible for crowd control during parades, fireworks, and special events. These roles strengthened her leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills especially in the school environment. Jade thrives in fast-paced environments and is especially interested in how digital media can be used to build strong, authentic connections amongst our Boarding community at Ascham.



- Macintosh House Staff

Freya Regan | Boarding Coordinator

Freya graduated from Ascham in 2022 and was appointed on the committee as the Head of Dalton in her final year. In 2023, Freya went to the UK and was a Gap Teacher at Bromsgrove School. Here, she worked in the Junior School as an assistant teacher and sporting coach. She also helped in the

Boarding House for the senior students. Freya absolutely loved working with kids and this wonderful experience sparked her interest in becoming a Boarding Coordinator at Ascham, starting in January 2026.

Freya has been working at Ascham for the past 2 years, helping with senior hockey, junior gymnastics and Prep pickups. She has loved being involved in the Ascham community and is excited to continue that in Boarding.

She is currently studying Medical Science at the University of Sydney and will be entering her third year in 2026.

Freya is a twin and is the youngest of 5 children. She is known for her love of sport, her engaging and positive nature, and is excited for this opportunity to provide guidance, support and help to the students.



- PJ/Annexe House Staff

Bernadette O'Donoghue | Head of House

Bernadette grew up in Newcastle and, after school, moved to Bathurst to study for a degree in journalism. Loving Bathurst and the surrounding countryside so much, she stayed on to join a Theatre in Education company touring schools in the Central West; Bernadette also taught and directed at Bathurst Youth Theatre. The areas of research for the plays led to work in Community Development and in Health Promotions for the local Health Service. While working she also completed a Graduate Dip Ed in English and Drama.

Before teaching, Bernadette decided to travel and ended up in Dublin, staying for 12 years instead of the planned one year! In Ireland, one of her jobs was as an assistant to former Prime Minister Garret Fitzgerald. She worked most of the time in a service supporting children in foster care and in care homes. She loved her extra-curricular life in Ireland – through writing groups, meeting Seamus Heaney and other Irish poets and writers. In Ireland, Bernadette completed a Masters in Comparative Literature and travelled to various parts of Europe.

Despite strong ties in Ireland, Bernadette missed Australia and her family. The position at Ascham was the first job offered on her return and her first time working in Boarding. Bernadette has been at Ascham since 2009 and, in her own words, has stayed longer than she expected as the work is so much more than she imagined. She has needed to bring all her life experience to the task. It is a balancing act to keep girls safe and thriving, and to support them to achieve the best they can in a pressured environment.

For Bernadette, it is a privilege, and fascinating, to see the evolution of human beings of various personalities, from 12 years to nearly adult young women, to understand them and to witness their amazing work ethic and determination to succeed.



- PJ/Annexe House Staff

Isabella Emmi | Boarding Coordinator

Isabella started as a Boarding Coordinator in January 2023. Isabella grew up in Orange and went to Kinross - it was there she had her first interaction with Ascham competing against them in rowing. After school, Isabella studied Social Science Psychology at CSU and during this time she developed a passion for mental health particularly among young adolescents.

Isabella has recently moved to Sydney and is currently studying architecture at the University of Sydney. She hopes to continue to further her interest in psychology and learn how to apply it within the field of architecture.

Isabella has always had an interest in youth development and the importance that strong relationships can have on an individual's growth. She is excited by the work in Boarding at Ascham, and to see the development of the girls and to watch them thrive and succeed.



- PJ/Annexe House Staff

Olivia Young | Boarding Coordinator

Olivia is originally from New Zealand and moved to Sydney in 2024. She joined the Ascham team in 2025 and has enjoyed exploring her passion for supporting and caring for young people in an education space. Olivia feels her own academic background has put her in good stead, having attended international Boarding Schools in Thailand, Vietnam, and South Korea. She enjoyed being a part of close-knit school communities as a child and relishes the opportunity of contributing to the Ascham community as a Boarding Coordinator.

Olivia comes from a healthcare background, having studied a Bachelors and Post-graduate Certificate in Nursing at various universities in New Zealand. She has worked in Neonatal Intensive Care Units across New Zealand and Australia over the past four years and currently works at the Royal Hospital of Women with premature babies. Olivia strongly values her nursing skillset and feels that they have been indispensable in her role at Ascham. She has enjoyed the opportunity to work with the Year 11 and 12 girls, and looks forward to continuing to support their emotional and physical welfare, and their academic growth.



- Raine House Staff

Elizabeth King | Head of House

Elizabeth joined Ascham in January 2025. She is an accomplished life coach and communications specialist with a dynamic career spanning over three decades across Australia, the US and the UK. Her expertise lies in guiding individuals and organisations through purposeful transformation, with a deep focus on communication, relationships, company culture, and creative strategy.

Elizabeth's early career was rooted in high-level communications, public relations and branding, working with prestigious clients across luxury, hospitality, health, fashion and media. She led teams, launched brands, and developed impactful campaigns that consistently boosted business outcomes—often increasing engagement and revenue by up to 30%.

Her ability to intuitively connect with people, develop creative strategies, and lead with integrity saw her rise to senior positions, including Director of Strategy and Communications, and Director of Lifestyle at leading agencies in both Sydney and London. Alongside her communications career, Elizabeth built and operated her own consultancy, Lizzie King Communications, working with high-profile clients in food, luxury goods, and travel.

Transitioning into life coaching, Elizabeth empowers clients to navigate personal and professional growth with clarity and confidence. She specialises in communications and relationship coaching, helping individuals tap into their intuition, align with their purpose, and achieve meaningful goals. Her compassionate yet focused approach fosters lasting change and renewed self-belief.

In 2021, Elizabeth brought her wealth of experience into education and pastoral care as Supervisor at Red Bend Catholic College in Forbes, NSW. In this role, she nurtured a positive residential culture, mentored staff, and supported the holistic development of students.

Elizabeth's career is defined by a commitment to integrity, creativity, and human connection. Whether working one-on-one with clients or leading cultural change in organisations, or supporting students in Boarding she brings wisdom, warmth, and an unwavering belief in people's potential.



- Raine House Staff

Bel Flack | Boarding Coordinator

Bel is from Southern NSW and joined Ascham in 2023. Bel was a boarder in Sydney before starting a Bachelor of Social Work at Australian Catholic University.

Bel loves being active, running most days along the Eastern Suburbs coastline. In her downtime, you'll find her relaxing with Netflix on the sofa or scouting new places to enjoy brunch.

Bel is a strong believer in putting out what you want to receive – where positivity will breed positivity.



- Raine House Staff

Stacey Hubert | Boarding Coordinator

Stacey brings a strong background in education, youth development, and student wellbeing to her role as a Boarding Coordinator at Ascham, alongside her work as a Casual Teacher in the Junior School. She holds a Bachelor of Education and has extensive experience working with young people through not-for-profit organisations, where her work has focused on pastoral care, mentoring, and creating safe, supportive environments, alongside professional experience in the tech sector and a STEM women's leadership company supporting community engagement and leadership development.

Stacey started as a Boarding Coordinator in 2025 and is passionate about building a warm "home away from home" within the Boarding community and supporting students' academic, social and emotional growth. She values open communication with families and believes strong partnerships between home and school are essential to student success. Originally from New Zealand, in her spare time Stacey enjoys attempting to improve her golf game, starting the day with a sunrise swim, and picking up the occasional new hobby.



- Residential Assistants (Gap Staff)

Tilly Boyle | Residential Assistant

Tilly has travelled from the Cotswolds in the UK to Sydney to work as a Gap Assistant for ten months. She brings an infectious passion for all things sport, having played a wide range of sports from a young age and competing competitively in swimming, hockey, and cricket. This love for sport continued through her time at Oxford Brookes University, where she played high-level hockey and served as the Wellbeing Officer on her university club committee. She also studied Marketing Management - something she describes not as a chore, but a genuine passion.

Throughout her work in wellbeing, Boarding, administration and tennis coaching, Tilly has found that the skills she developed both academically and through sport have transferred seamlessly into supporting students. She enjoys connecting with young people, fostering their wellbeing, and contributing positively to their school experience.

During her time in Australia, Tilly hopes to make the most of every opportunity to travel and explore. She has already visited New Zealand and journeyed up Australia's East Coast, embracing new cultures, experiences and friendships along the way.

When she returns to the UK, Tilly hopes to pursue a career that blends her two great passions: sport and marketing.



- Residential Assistants (Gap Staff)

Freya Harry-Berry | Residential Assistant

Freya is from West Sussex, England and joined Ascham as a Gap student in September 2025. Freya completed a degree in Criminology and Education at Oxford Brookes University, which she thoroughly enjoyed. Within Ascham, Freya assists in the Boarding House and also in the Learning Enhancement Department.

After completing a degree in Education Freya found her passion for teaching and childcare, which she hopes to continue with further in the future. She is currently looking at finishing her final teaching qualification so she can begin teaching Primary Education internationally.

Freya has a passion for all things art and drama and enjoys sharing her enthusiasm around these subjects with the boarders, and is excited to help out with more school productions in the future.



- Boarding Administrator

Anita Grinberg | Boarding Administrator

Anita grew up in Sydney and went to Kambala, where she had her first interactions with Ascham girls during intense Saturday morning sport throughout her high school career.

Anita studied Commerce at UNSW, graduating with a Major in International Business and Marketing Honours. Her first position in the corporate world was with the Singapore Tourism Board, responsible for facilitating international conferences and events for Australian and New Zealand corporations wanting to host their business events in Singapore. This is where her passion for event management grew exponentially and she honed her skills accordingly. Anita started at Ascham in 2019 in the role of Boarding Administrator.

Anita has two daughters and a son. Her older children are in Senior School at Reddam House while her youngest daughter only started daycare last year. On the rare occasions when Anita is not managing Boarding at Ascham, she takes the opportunity to go for long bushwalks and explore new areas – a passion that her Labrador, Ziggy, thoroughly enjoys participating in.



- Boarding Prep Coordinator

Sarah Purdie | Boarding Prep Coordinator

Sarah has been the Boarding Prep Coordinator at Ascham since February 2022. As an Ascham Old Girl, Sarah holds valuable knowledge to help the future generations with their academic studies. For Sarah, Ascham teachers left a memorable impression from their care and compassion, and she is honoured to have the ability to pass this on to the young boarders.

Currently, Sarah also follows her passion at UNSW, studying a Bachelor of Education (Secondary) combined with a Bachelor of Science, with specialisation in learning difficulties. Before working at Ascham, Sarah took the opportunity to be a senior manager and volunteer with a tutoring group targeting students with a disadvantaged background. It was wonderful to see eager students with a passion to learn, and she is seeing that same enthusiasm and drive with the Ascham girls.



- Head of Boarding

Allysia Heness-Pugh | Head of Boarding

Allysia has been working as a Boarding educator for the past 20 years and came to Ascham School as the Head of Boarding at the start of 2021. Allysia grew up near Bathurst in Central West NSW and was a boarder at All Saints College. Allysia thinks often of Geoffrey Blainey's classic 1966 text, '*The Tyranny of Distance*', in considering how remoteness and opportunity has shaped the course of thousands of boarders' lives in Australia, including her own. For Allysia, Boarding instilled independence, resilience and self-motivation. These three values have equipped her to be resourceful and creative in adulthood and she has continued to carry them close to her heart throughout her career.

Allysia completed a Bachelor of Art Theory at UNSW and an Associate Degree in Residential Care (Boarding) at ACU. Prior to her role at Ascham, Allysia was the Deputy Head of Boarding at Abbotsleigh. Allysia is strongly committed to service learning, establishing the first Boarding School partnership with Guide Dogs NSW/ACT to raise a guide dog puppy in an educational institution. The sense of home that an animal brings to a Boarding setting is invaluable but the program also helps bridge divides between Boarding students and the wider community. There is great joy in having this program at Ascham with our current 'puppy', Whoopie.

For Allysia, any successful Boarding environment must centre on building meaningful relationships. It is a place where students should be nurtured by engaged staff to thrive academically, socially and emotionally. Allysia's vision of Boarding is that of authenticity and connectedness. Effective communication with students, staff and parents is essential. With positive Boarding connections, students feel respected and valued so as to contribute meaningfully to the wider community.

Although Allysia has lived in cities for the last 20 years, the call of regional NSW has never been too far away. Allysia and her husband, Troy, own a property in Dungog in the upper Hunter and manage a small herd of black Angus cattle. This ongoing connection to a rural community provides a contemporary perspective on the challenges faced by Boarding families and helps build authentic

relationships with parents who entrust their daughters into the care of Boarding at Ascham. Allysia and Troy's daughter, Elsie, is in Year 7 at Ascham and, living on campus, has the heart of a boarder!

Upcoming events



Join us at our signature parent cocktail event where we renew friendships and welcome our new parents to our community.

[Click here](#) to buy tickets

Date: Fri 6 March 2026
Time: 6.30–10pm



Family fun for Chinese Lunar New Year—come and celebrate with us!

Date: Sun 1 March 2026
Time: 11am-2.30pm

[Click here](#) to RSVP



Join us for the first Books and Breakfast of 2026 with Mick Elliott.

Date: Fri 20 February 2026
Time: 7.15–8.30am

[Click here](#) to RSVP



View this week's Sports Fixtures [here](#)



The 2026 Sister in Sport program is all about championing women in sports leadership—celebrating their remarkable achievements, amplifying their voices and paving the way for a brighter, more inclusive future in the world of sports.

To keep up to date with everything the program has to offer:

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This year we are proud to bring you *14 Decades of Stories*, a year-long series shining a light on just some of our remarkable graduates who have shaped their fields, challenged conventions, and made a profound difference in the world. These are stories of Ascham women who stepped forward—often into spaces where women were not expected, welcomed nor encouraged—and did so with conviction and tenacity.

For even more updates, follow us!



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