



Parents' Handbook

For parents of international students attending
British Boarding Schools

Telephone contact available 24 hours

+447831 865530

or

+441883 712782 (UK office hours)

Email: enquiries@english-country-guardians.co.uk

WhatsApp: +447831865530

Text message: +447831865530

Message from the Principal



Dear Parents

Thank you for trusting English Country Guardians to care for your child and keep them safe while they are in the UK. Choosing the right Educational Guardian is a big decision. You can be confident that we have the experience to deliver an excellent guardianship service.

We will be in contact with your child from the time they arrive, and will be available to help in any way that is needed.

We will be in contact with your child's school to ensure that they are making progress academically and coping with boarding. We attend parent meetings and will send you a full written report. If you wish to raise any matter with the school we will represent you and act on your instruction.

We will be in regular contact with you. We will send you reports and photographs so you can share in your child's time in the UK.

This handbook contains information which we hope you will find useful. You probably have many other questions. You can send an email any time or call a number on the front cover during UK office hours. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanna Winstanley".

Joanna Winstanley

Principal: English Country Guardians

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1. Essential documents for student entry into UK

Please check this section carefully to ensure that you have all the necessary documents. Do contact English Country Guardians or your local agent immediately if you have any problems.

a) Visa – (BRP)

- All overseas students with non UK passports will require a Tier 4 Child Visa to enter and study in the UK.
- You will need to apply to the UK Visas and Immigration for your visa. Check the website for exact details relating to your country.
- You can usually apply for your visa up to 3 months in advance of your date of travel.
- Apply early. Processing times vary.
- UK Visas and Immigration recommend you book your child's flight after you have received the visa – in case the visa is rejected or delayed.

To apply for a visa you must have the following:-

1. **A CAS number.** This will be issued by the school. It is a “Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies” and proves you have an allocated place at the boarding school issuing your number. Only approved schools are able to issue CAS numbers.

- If your child is under 16 years old, you only have to provide the reference number of your confirmation of acceptance for studies. You will not need any other documents.
- If your child is 16 or 17 years old, you may have to supply the original evidence of any academic qualifications.

2. **Evidence that you have paid school fees** to cover both the course and accommodation. If the CAS letter does not mention payment details, you must send an original paper receipt issued by your school confirming the amount you have paid.

If you have not paid fees in full, you will need to prove that you will have sufficient money to cover the fees. You will need to provide bank statements.

3. **Letter from parents giving consent to travel.** A sample letter is in the Appendix 1. This can be copied. It must be signed by both parents.

4. **Evidence about Guardian arrangements.** English Country Guardians provide a letter for this purpose.

5. **Evidence that your Guardian is allowed in the UK.** Normally the letter is sufficient. Please contact English Country Guardians if this is requested.

6. **Biometric information** – fingerprints and photograph of face.

If you need any other information or help with the visa application, please contact us.

b) Passport

- Check the expiry date. Passports must be valid for at least 6 months.
- Renew it in advance. It can be difficult organising passports and visas from the UK.
- Ensure your Guardian has a recent passport style photograph of your child – this may be required later by the school or for other purposes in the UK.
- Prepare a wallet to that can safely hold both the passport and the BRP visa card. Your child will need to keep both very safe!

c) Evidence of any Name Change

If you have legally changed your child's name, provide a document that clearly shows the original name and the new name. This should be the original name change document with a clear government stamp.

2. Insurance

We cannot advise or recommend travel insurance, but you may wish to consider insurance to cover:-

- travel delays, missed departure, lost luggage, lost money, lost passport
- personal accident or injury
- loss or damage to belongings
- personal liability
- private medical or dental treatment
- school fees if your child is unable to attend UK school due to illness etc

Your child will be covered for:-

Free NHS health care and emergency treatment once they are registered with the school doctor . Your school will advise on this.

Trips and excursions organised by the school.

Dental treatment is not usually free – you will have to pay for any treatment.

3. Booking flights

When booking flights to the UK, please consider:-

- b) Transfer time from airport to school
 - Your Guardian can advise you of these.
- c) The time that students are allowed to arrive at school.
 - School staff can only cope with students arriving within certain hours. They will publish these times.
 - English Country Guardians can care for your child until it is time for school to open.
- d) Jet lag
 - Your child may need to rest and adjust before starting at school, especially if the time difference causes jetlag.
 - English Country Guardians can organise Homestay for the number of days you require before the start of term.

When booking return flights home, please consider:-

- Term dates.
 - Schools request that students are present for the full term and do not leave early at the end of a term.
- Time the student will need to leave school.
 - Allow for transfer time to airport plus 3 hours for check in before the published flight departure.
 - School staff can only cope with students departing within certain hours.
 - English Country Guardians can organise Homestay for the night before very early departures or care for your child until a late departure.

4. Essential Documents to carry in Hand Luggage

Your child will need to have the following essential documents in their hand luggage to show on arrival in the UK. Please make sure that you keep a copy of each one.

- Passport
- Visa
- Letter from parents giving consent to travel
- Travel Form and email- sent by English Country Guardians, this gives all arrangements for meeting at the airport, contact telephone numbers and where the student is travelling to
- Confirmation of enrolment letter from school with CAS number
- Name and address of the school where student will be boarding

5. Landing at a UK Airport

- English Country Guardians has prepared a separate guide to help your child understand immigration, passport control and baggage reclaim at the airport.

a) First Arrival in the UK – unaccompanied student

- If your child is travelling on their own to the UK for the first time, a member of the ECG team or an ECG driver will be at the airport to meet your child in the Arrivals Hall when they arrive in the UK.
- You will be sent an “Airport Transfer Form” which has all the details of the person meeting your child.
- All arrangements for your child’s safe transfer from airport to school will be organised by English Country Guardians as part of the included service. You will be sent full details of all transfer arrangements.
- In the unlikely event of your child not being met on arrival, they should go to the Information Desk and show the “Airport Transfer Form.”

b) First Arrival in the UK – accompanied by parent

- English Country Guardians can organise taxi transfers and accommodation for parents with students as an optional service.
- You will receive an “Airport Transfer Form” and email with all the transfer and accommodation details with useful telephone numbers.

6. Airport Taxi Transfers

1. You will be sent a link to a Cognito Form - an online form to complete with your child’s travel details. English Country Guardians organises all the airport transfers and confirms arrangements with your child’s school, your child and with you.
2. If your school provides transport, we will check the details with the school transport co-ordinator.
3. If your child’s school does not provide transport we will book this for you. We have a team of preferred professional taxi drivers. All the drivers have completed police checks and are registered to transport children.
4. The cost of transport from the airport will be charged to your Expense Account.
5. Where possible, taxis will be shared with students from the same school. Your child can request if they would like to travel with a friend.
6. If your child needs to travel to the airport at any other time apart outside school holidays, English Country Guardians can assist with travel arrangements and airport transfers.

7. Flight Cancellation or Delay

If your child is unable to fly home for any reason (e.g. bad weather, fog, snow), English Country Guardians will organise accommodation and alternative flight arrangements. This may incur a cost which will be charged to your expense account.

8. Included Services

Full details of the services we provide are in your contract. Here is a summary of the services provided to all students.

1. Help with joining your new school and help on arrival in the UK. We will answer any queries you may have and help ensure your child has everything they need to start their new school. We will arrange to meet you in person soon after you arrive in the UK.
2. Personal Guardian – a professional adult who will be the main contact for you and your child in the UK. They live near your child’s school, will meet your child at least once a term (this may be either in school and/or during an exeat weekend) and will be available to help and support you as needed.
3. High Quality Homestay accommodation with professional families close to your child’s school. All host families hold DBS checks and uphold our regulations to ensure your child is kept safe.
4. Help with Transport – to and from homestay and the airport.
5. 24 Hour Help in Emergencies
6. Cultural & Social Activities to help your child make new friends and get the best from their UK homestay experience

Parents who have opted for the Two Crown or Three Crown Service will enjoy one or more of the following services:-

1. Additional Educational Support for students preparing for new schools or university
2. Help with monitoring and replying to school communications
3. Chinese Translation Services
4. Medical support – for those with ongoing medical or dental appointments
5. Extra curricular support for students who have regular commitments outside school.

9. Extra Charges – charged at cost

Taxi transfers to and from airport, school uniform and equipment, SIM card and mobile phone top up.

Homestay visit charged on a per night basis, including all meals. Excursions extra.

Transport from school to homestay accommodation.

10. Optional Services

Optional Services can be requested at any time. Below is a selection of the services we provide. We are always happy to help in other ways. Please contact us to discuss your exact requirements

- a) Arrange delivery of treats to school for special occasions e.g. birthday. Some ideas:-
 - Cakes
 - Chocolates
 - Flowers
 - Accompany your child and friends to a celebration meal
- b) Daytime hosting for early or late airline arrivals and departures
- c) Storage of personal belongings over summer vacations
 - In climate controlled, fully insured premises
- d) Accompany student to social events –
 - If your child is invited to attend a birthday party outside school we will ensure that they travel safely
 - We can also arrange to host parties outside school on request.
- e) Arrangement of private tuition – to give extra support in specific subjects, if needed.
 - We engage professional teachers who are experts in their subjects
- f) Emergency visa application or renewal
- g) Book plane tickets for students
- h) Assist with parent and family visits, travel and accommodation
 - Advice on transport – the best methods and time between destinations
 - Accommodation options – hotels, guest houses, B& B, self catering
 - English Country Guardians rents a self catering apartment, sleeps 3

11. Spending Money for Students

Students will require some spending money at school

- They will need to buy some toiletries during a term
- Schools have a shop where students can buy essentials and treats
- Students will be encouraged to give money to support charity events at school
- There will be some educational trips (e.g theatre visit) run by the school during the week to enhance the curriculum learning. Students may like to buy souvenirs of the visit.
- There will be cultural and shopping trips for boarders at weekends
- Students might want to try new foods and sweets.
- Students may wish to order take-away food as a treat with friends.

The amount of spending money that should be given to students is a personal decision within the family. You may find the following helpful:-

- The average pocket money for students aged 11 – 16 per term is £300
- Students should only keep a small amount of cash with them in school. Suggest £40
- If you give cash to your child to take to school, place it in an envelope with their name. They should give it immediately to their Houseparent to keep in the safe.

12. Shopping & Bank Accounts

All shops in the UK accept payments by card or phone. Most students will want to make online purchases.

If you can set up a bank debit card or phone payment for your child before they leave home, that will be very helpful.

It is now very hard to open a bank account in the UK for students under the age of 18. Parents may be able to set up a UK bank account online.

ECG can transfer money from your Expense Account into your child's UK bank account for you. This can help lower your money transfer costs and allows you to set limits on the funds available in your child's account.

ECG can set up a prepaid debit card for your child to use in the UK. You state how much money you want to give your child for pocket money per month. Prepaid debit cards are accepted by shops and online as it works like a bank card.

13. Educational Guardianship & Academic Progress

As qualified teachers, English Country Guardians provides excellent academic support and guidance for you and your child. This is all part of our service.

- We understand that your child's academic progress is very important.
 - Please ask your child's school to send us copies of all communication – letters, reports etc.
- We understand that the method of teaching in the UK may be unfamiliar to you and your child.
 - If you have any worries or concerns, please contact us.
- We will monitor your child's academic reports and discuss their progress with the staff at school and your child.
 - We will notify you if there are areas for concern.
 - If appropriate, we can suggest how academic performance can be improved.
- We use our professional judgement to assist with subject choices for your child e.g. GCSE, A level or IB.

14. Emergencies and sickness whilst at school

Emergency cover is all part of our service. If your child is sick or injured, we will care for your child and notify you immediately.

- The school has a health centre with trained nurses and a doctor. They will care for your child if there is a minor illness or injury. Cost of this care is free on the NHS.
- English Country Guardians are on call 24 hours a day. The school will notify us if your child needs our help and support. We will be with your child promptly.
 - We provide Homestay nursing for your child when requested by the school health centre.
 - We will escort and support your child if they go to hospital.
- Homesickness – this is quite normal. Most students feel homesick at some point. Your child may sound distressed when they call you. Try not to worry, they always feel better after talking to parents. All Staff at school and at English Country Guardians are trained to help your child cope with homesickness and will support them when needed. Please tell us if your child becomes homesick.

15. Suspension or expulsion from school

If a student misbehaves and breaks a school rule, the school may not allow them to remain in school.

- English Country Guardians will take your child from school immediately and will arrange suitable Homestay accommodation. Parents will be contacted immediately.

16. Weekends & Informal Home Visits

English Country Guardians arranges some social activities for students and host families during the school year. This is part of the service to give all students some relaxation and the cultural experience of visiting an English house.

- Parents and students will be notified of the events and will have the option whether they would like to participate.
- Students, with permission from parents and school, are always welcome to visit their Guardian for a friendly and informal chat over tea or hot chocolate.

17. Holidays, Homestay & Host Families

For weekends when school is closed, and half term holidays, students have the option to stay in an English house with a host family. English Country Guardians will be available for support throughout the holiday. This is part of the service.

1. Parents are asked to complete an online form before the start of each term to indicate whether their child will require homestay for any period during the term. It is important to give as much notice as possible.
2. Notify us as soon as possible if you need to change homestay arrangements. To be fair to our homestay families, late notice of less than one week may result in charges.
3. To safeguard the children, all host families undertake an extensive interview process and a police check (enhanced DBS checks). All houses are inspected.
4. As far as possible, we match the interests of students and host families and try to meet your requests.
5. Students will have time for study. Homestays have a suitable desk or study area
6. We respect all religions and host families will arrange for students to attend a place of worship if required.
7. English Country Guardians may also provide some activities and excursions during school holidays. Parents and students will be notified of the excursions and costs. It is strongly recommended that all students participate in at least one activity per week.
8. **More details about Homestay are given in the Student Handbook.** We have established some rules to keep your child safe. We trust you will understand the need for the rules. Please discuss the following points with your child:-
 - i. Host Family House Rules
 - ii. Laundry & Personal Hygiene
 - iii. Medical & Dental Help
 - iv. Religious Worship
 - v. Accidental Damage
 - vi. Meeting friends & dating
 - vii. Curfew
 - viii. Friends to stay at your Homestay
 - ix. Visiting London
 - x. Smoking, Drugs, Alcohol & Bad Behaviour

18. Expense Account

The Expense Account is used to cover any expenses that your child incurs in the UK – for example taxis and homestay.

You can also request us to make UK payments for you – for example to teachers for extra lessons and tuition or for school trips.

We will send you 3 statements of your Expense Account each year. These are sent after the Autumn and Spring half term holidays and at the end of the Summer term.

When your Expense Account is low in funds, we will send you an invoice to top it up.

When you no longer require our services, money remaining in your account will be returned to you.

19. Complaints Procedure

We expect that most concerns can be quickly resolved.

- If you have any worries, concerns or complaints at any time – please send an email so we can deal with the matter very quickly.
- We will acknowledge a written complaint within one working day and will work immediately to resolve the problem.
- English Country Guardians has a Concerns and Complaints Policy and will send this to parents on request.

20. Cancelling Guardianship Agreement

Should you need to cancel your Guardianship Agreement with English Country Guardians you are asked to give us one term of notice in writing, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Please see your Guardianship Contract for full details.

21. AEGIS

English Country Guardians is fully accredited by AEGIS – (The Association for the Education and Guardianship of International Students.) AEGIS regularly and rigorously inspects accredited Guardianship Organisations to ensure that we maintain a very high standard of care for your child. You may be occasionally be asked to participate in questionnaires issued by AEGIS

22. Parent Contact

Thank you again for trusting us to care for your child while they are in the UK. We take the responsibility seriously and will do everything we can to assist them during their stay.

- We look forward to regular contact with you.
- We will inform you of your child's progress in England.

- We use email to keep in contact and reply promptly – usually within 2 days
 - For general enquiries email enquiries@english-country-guardians.co.uk
 - Direct contact with the Principal joanna@english-country-guardians.co.uk
 - Financial matters finance@english-country-guardians.co.uk

- You can contact us any time in case of a **real emergency 24/7 – +44 7831865530**
- In an emergency you can also **Whatsapp us on +447831865530**

- Do notify us when you are coming to England as we will enjoy meeting you.

Appendix 1 Letter from parents.

You may copy this letter.

You may need it for your visa application.

Your child should travel with a copy of this letter.

They may be required to show it to gain entry into the UK.

Add your address

Add the date

To whom it may concern

We are the parents of *(add child's name)*

We are writing to confirm that our child, *(add child's name)* is travelling to the UK for the purpose of studying at *(add school)*.

We agree to the arrangements made by English Country Guardians for meeting and transporting our child to the accommodation.

Accommodation arrangements for our child have been made by the school and also by the Educational Guardianship organisation, English Country Guardians. We agree to the arrangements they have made.

Signed.....(parent 1)

Signed.....(parent 2)

Appendix 2 – Keeping Students Safe

English Country Guardians is committed to the safety of students in our care.

Below are some key issues, what the terms mean and the policies and procedures that we operate to protect all members of English Country Guardians. Click on this link <https://www.english-country-guardians.co.uk/keeping-students-safe> if you would like to read the full policy. We update our policies regularly in line with changes to UK legislation and best practices. We work closely with AEGIS to ensure that our procedures are robust.

Privacy Policy	In the UK we are required by law to protect the privacy of the personal and sensitive data of all members of ECG. How and why we use your data is explained in our Privacy Policy
DBS certificate	All members of ECG undergo a police and government department check to ensure they do not have a criminal record that would make them unsuitable to work with children.
Safeguarding & Child Protection	Safeguarding means protecting children from abuse, preventing harm to children’s health and development and ensuring that they have safe and effective care. Child Protection are the methods used to protect young people. Our Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy provides guidance for all members of ECG on how to keep students safe. All members also receive regular Safeguarding training.
Prevent (Anti Radicalisation)	“Prevent” relates to safeguarding people and communities from the threat of terrorism. ECG homestays provide a safe space for discussions, provide balanced political ideas and understand the duty to report any student they believe is at risk. Prevent Policy
Whistleblowing	This means reporting information about, or an activity performed by, a member of ECG that is illegal, unethical or not appropriate within the framework of work conducted by ECG. Whistleblowing Policy
Missing child policy	ECG maintains a very strict procedure before students are allowed to travel independently or to meet with friends or relatives. Should a student appear to go missing, the Missing Child Policy outlines the procedures that ECG will follow.
Online-Safety	“Online safety” means protecting students from risks when they are communicating via the internet. The Online Safety Policy outlines the preventative measures taken by ECG, explains possible online risks, how to recognise signs of abuse, and what ECG members should do if online abuse is suspected.
Complaints Policy	Please contact us immediately if you have any complaint. ECG will aim to resolve it immediately. The Complaints Policy clearly outlines the procedure that will take place if the complaint is not dealt with informally.
Low Levels Concern Policy	ECG encourages all parents, students and ECG Team members, if they feel uneasy to raise their concern immediately. The Low Levels Concern Policy outlines how ECG responds to and records matters of concern.