



Quest Guardians

Overseas Parents Handbook 2009-10

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Welcome to Quest Guardians!



Your child is now one of a number of international students living and studying in the UK who are part of the Quest family.

Your child's school is a long way from home, so we are here to make his/her stay as happy and as trouble free as possible.

Upon your first arrival here in the UK or within a few days, you and/or your child will meet either Chris Michelmores, director of Quest, or a Quest Guardians representative. You must not hesitate to ask questions at any time.....if in doubt, RING US!

1. Why does your son/daughter need a Guardian?

Boarding schools in the UK require all their students whose families live overseas to have a Guardian resident in the UK, normally aged over 25 years. It is also now a UK Visa requirement. Whilst at the school, your child's housemaster or housemistress will take responsibility for academic progress and welfare, but there are times during the term and more especially outside term time, when the school must be able to hand over these responsibilities to a properly appointed Guardian. These responsibilities include:

- acting on your behalf in situations where you are unable to do so due to distance or timing;
- looking after your child's welfare in the UK when the school is closed for holidays;
- providing a host family* for your child to stay with during Half Term and fixed Exeat weekends when the school is closed;
- assisting you with things your child may need – school uniform, sports equipment, phone cards, mobile phone, UK mobile sim card, etc.;
- helping you arrange your child's travel both in the UK (taxi, train or bus) and back home (flight bookings, transfers);
- helping you and your child if things go wrong:
 - if your child gets into trouble at school he or she may be suspended and asked to leave the school for a period, at short notice
 - if you have problems with immigration or passports (for example, lost or stolen)
 - if your child gets very ill and needs to go to hospital
- being available for your child anytime, particularly if you or he/she is worried about things like:
 - work
 - school
 - friends
 - the host family your child stays with.

* Our carefully selected and inspected host families are fully checked and required to protect, care for and provide full board and lodging for your child. PLEASE NOTE, however, legal guardianship remains with Quest Guardians.

2. What can you expect of Quest Guardians?

Quest Guardians is a **personal and professional** guardianship agency. The following standards of care can be expected:

✓ A Personal Service

At School:

- Every student gets to know the director and/or other Quest personnel and will have fast email/telephone communication;
- Every student receives regular contact and school visits;
- Schools are telephoned soon after the arrival of each new student to check on progress and the settling in process.

The Host Family:

- We try to match the student to the Host Family by finding out the interests and character of each individual child;
- Every Host Family is personally inspected and checked to the highest standards;
- We ring the family every time a new student arrives, and also speak to the student, to make sure all is well.

You, the Parents

- We like to consider ourselves as a partnership with you in the care of your child.
- We will bring any concerns to your attention and update you on contacts we have with your child.
- We will give you prior written confirmation of any host, travel or other arrangements made on behalf of your child, by either email or fax or via the agent
- Parental consent for overnight stays (see Quest Guardians policy below)

✓ Arriving in the UK

Most intercontinental flights arrive at London Heathrow Airport, but if a chosen school is not near London, we have found KLM flights via Amsterdam to be the most easy and economical. There are connections from Amsterdam to Birmingham, Southampton, Manchester and Bristol.

For transfers between the airport and school, or between the Host Family and school, Quest Guardians have drivers available to meet students and take them to any address in the UK. Travel by rail and coach can be arranged for economical long distance transfer. Quest will check timetables, book tickets and arrange for an escort if required.

✓ At School – The first days and thereafter

A student's first few days and weeks can be an anxious time for both the child and the parents. Quest Guardians will telephone the school after the first few days, and visit soon after to check how a new student is settling in, followed by feedback to parents.

We encourage parents to allow the child the time to settle, to get used to a new environment and culture, to meet new friends and to become familiar with the boarding house and school arrangements. All of this can take a whole term or more to achieve.

Thereafter, students will have regular contact with Quest Guardians, Chris Michelmore, Director, the office staff and the local field coordinators. During each term there will be a school visit, during which we discuss academic performance, interests such as music, friends made and life in the boarding house. We ask for feedback on Host Family arrangements, and check on travel plans for the end of term. We also report back to parents on the visit.

Parental Authority – Schools frequently email or post requests to us for parental permission for your child to participate in school activities and excursions. Our policy is to forward these to you for approval if the cost is over GBP50, and / or the activity involves a strenuous or potentially dangerous activity. Otherwise we will sign on your behalf, unless you indicate otherwise on the Application Form.

✓ **Our host families**

Quest Guardians have a number of Host Families with whom we place our students when schools are closed for half-terms and exeat weekends. We try to match as closely as possible the family to the child in terms of interests, geography and outlook on life. Most of our students return to the same host family for all their stays, but changes can and do occur, especially where requested by the student or the family. All hosts and students are given guidelines explaining what is expected of each of them.

Frequently, more than one student of a similar age will be staying with a host family at any one time. In our experience, students prefer this as it offers them additional company and friendship during what is essentially a holiday period.

Our Host Families can range from a man and wife with young children to retired grandparents, whose own children have grown up. They all have a kind disposition toward children from overseas and are given guidelines and, where necessary, training from Quest Guardians on the best practice when having an overseas student to stay. Students are expected to respect their host family's way of life in return for being accepted as a family member.

All our host families are regularly visited and inspected by us, and they formally undertake to protect and care for the students in their charge, and are checked against the British police database. Legal guardianship remains with Quest during a student's host family stay.

Hosts are encouraged to include students in family life and to arrange activities and excursions. Hosts have an allowance of up to £20 on top of their housekeeping to cover extra expenses associated with this. Receipts are required and, if claimed by the host, this expense will be added to your account.

Arrangements for placing a student in a host family are made within one week of the start of term and therefore any special requests should be made before that time. Please note the cancellation policies for the different service schemes.

Quest Guardians Policy regarding students NOT staying in a Quest Guardians Host Family

Quest Guardians staff are often informed by students (or parents) that they wish to make their “OWN ARRANGMENTS” for one or more nights’ accommodation during Half Terms and Exeat Weekends. We have a duty of care to the parents and their children to protect the students and to provide safe host family accommodation. The following policy is used by all staff when considering a request from a student (or parent) regarding alternative Half Term / Exeat care arrangements:

Students Aged 18 or over on start date of Exeat or Half Term

Parents Permission is required in writing by verified email or fax

Students Aged 17 on start date of Exeat or Half Term

As Above, plus we require full address and plans

Students Aged 16 on start date of Exeat or Half Term

As above PLUS we require a named adult, residing in the UK and over 25 years old, who will take responsibility for the student during the stay.

Students Aged 15 or under on start date of Exeat or Half Term

As above PLUS we require full contact with the adult and arrangement confirmed in writing. The adult will need to confirm that they will be taking responsibility for the student during the break.

The above is subject to amendment, if required, to comply with any particular school’s policy.

3. What is the cost of the Quest Guardians service?

The costs and full details of the service are available on request.

“Quest Total Care” Under this scheme a payment is made to cover all school term breaks, allowing us to book a family in advance for all Exeats and Half Terms. This enables your child to build a good relationship with (normally) the same Host Family, who can themselves also plan for the holiday dates. The best families can be retained well in advance, but please note that unless we are notified of alternative arrangements within the first week of each term the family **will be paid in full**. We also arrange to attend a school parent’ evening each year and have a GBP50 limit on each return host transfer.

Quest Gold Service is a complete package with few supplementary costs. All younger students under the age of 13 should join this service or the “Total Care” service. **Quest Silver Service** is ideal for students aged 14 and over on 1st September. Host family stays are charged separately at GBP30 per night (first night at GBP45 on Silver Service).

Additionally, there is a non-returnable, one-off registration fee and an expense deposit of between GBP600-1600 from which we pay for accommodation, transfers and pocket money. Any other expense is charged only after consultation with parents. Under Gold and Silver Service parents will be invoiced at the end of each term for the amount required to restore the expense deposit.

ONE FULL TERMS NOTICE is required if you wish to change guardians or terminate our services.

4. What else do you need to be aware of?

Visas and Passports – whilst we can offer assistance, we are advised by the UK Home Office that extension forms must be completed by the student. We strongly advise parents to seek visa renewal in your home country to avoid unnecessary expense and delay. We have experience of students unable to return home due to their visas not being renewed on time.

Start and End of Terms – Please be aware that schools require students to conform with all school rules and to adhere to published school dates for the start and end of terms.

Mobile Phones – Quest can assist in arranging “Pay as you go” mobile sim cards or phones. Schools invariably control the use of mobiles by students and students are discouraged from using their phones in an antisocial way.

Internet access – There is increasing concern about the dangers to young people of free and unrestricted access to the internet without appropriate controls. Quest Guardians have guidelines for Host Families, and will advise Hosts to limit access in the best interests of the student. For example, wireless internet will often be switched off overnight, and schools will also have restricted networks. However, it is impossible for Quest Guardians and their Host Families to police this effectively and therefore the liability and responsibility for internet use and downloads rests with the student.

In case of emergencies, ring one of the following numbers

Office - +44 (0)1202 882299

Mobile (Emergencies) +44 (0)7831 876416

Please use the Office number for all non-emergency calls