



Quest Guardians

HOST FAMILY HANDBOOK 2009/10

Important Numbers

During Office Hours

01202 882299

In Emergency

07831 876416

At *Quest Guardians* our Host Families offer their student guests:

- ✓ A welcoming and understanding “home from home”
- ✓ A level of day to day protection and care, as if they were their own
- ✓ Full board and comfortable lodging
- ✓ A temporary place in the family circle

At *Quest Guardians* we fully support our host families in expecting students to be polite, friendly and to treat their host’s family, friends and property with respect!!

Hosting Students from Overseas

When you are considering to host, it is a good to ask yourselves some basic questions:

- Do we know our responsibilities and what to expect?
- Do we know, or have we been given, relevant information about the social and cultural background of our visitor(s)?
- Are we prepared to be welcoming and hospitable to young people living away from their own family, and to take responsibility for their care and welfare during the homestay?
- Are we open-minded with flexible household routines and happy to include our visitor in family outings and entertainment?
- Do we know who to contact if we need help/advice or in the case of an emergency?

Host family responsibilities

During the times that you are hosting, your responsibilities are to protect, care for and provide full board and lodging for your student on a day-to-day basis. All the while, legal guardianship remains with Quest, whom you should contact whenever a situation arises in which you are uncertain as to the appropriate action to take. Untoward occurrences, such as hospitalisation, unexplained student absences or other situations effecting student safety, should be reported to Quest immediately.

Your visitor will normally be attending a private boarding school in the UK. Many of these schools offer fixed “Exeat” weekends in addition to the normal half-term holidays. During these periods, the boarding houses close giving staff and students a break, and the students are required to make alternative arrangements.

Parents often choose host family accommodation because it offers a ‘home away from home’ in a family atmosphere, where students can practice another language, learn about another culture, and be treated as one of the family. When your student first arrives at your home it is so important to be welcoming and understanding, as staying in an unfamiliar environment can be an anxious time for a young person whose family lives many thousands of miles away.

School Contact - In the normal course of events, you will not be expected to instigate contact with a student's school or to attend school occasions. Where either do occur, it would be at the instigation of Quest and with the agreement of the host.

The following guidelines are designed to assist in making the experience a worthwhile and enjoyable one for both parties. **Students have also been given guidelines** on what to expect during a stay in a Quest Guardians Host Family, both on the standard of care they might expect and their own behaviour.

1. Arrival

Your student(s) may arrive at your home by taxi or you may like to collect them yourselves. For some students this may be their first visit to an English home and it will be very different from their own home and school environments. They will probably feel a little anxious and tired and so a warm welcome is vital.

They may have difficulty speaking English and therefore may not understand you fully. Be patient and friendly- remember that hospitality starts on arrival and those first few minutes are vital in helping the student to gain confidence. Offer a drink and perhaps something to eat, and thereafter to show them your house/garden, their room and introduce them to other members of your family and pets – many students are afraid of dogs, especially in China where pets are rare.

After the initial welcome, it is a good time to explain household arrangements and to discuss any house rules for the visit, such as when they can most conveniently take a shower, mealtimes, routines, access to telephone and internet, dietary requirements etc.

2. Health and Safety

Make sure all electrical appliances are safe, particularly in the student's room. Smoke alarms should be fitted in the house. Explain to the students basic escape routes, access to the outside doors, and the location of any necessary keys.

Mobile Phone Numbers – Swap numbers, so they are known to all parties, as well as land line and any other useful contact numbers. As host, you should at all times know where your visitor is and be able to contact him/her if required.

In case of **student illness or accident**, take the same precautions as you would with your own child. If in doubt, your first course of action should be to contact your family doctor in the usual way. The student will have been registered with the NHS by the school. If the illness becomes more serious or hospitalisation ensues, or treatment at your local A&E is necessary, you should immediately contact your regional Quest coordinator or ring the Quest emergency number: 07831 876416.

3. Use of computers and telephones

Students now expect **access to an internet connection**, preferably wireless. Many schools now also provide this. The internet is often required for academic work and students also use the internet to stay in touch with their family and friends during the holiday period. It can be difficult to place students in Host Families who have no internet access.

Students should not need to use your telephone landline, although some have pre-payment cards to ring home to their parents. They should always ask for your permission.

4. Bedroom

Each student should have his or her own room or share with someone of a similar age and of the same sex. Quest Guardians accreditation requires us to be aware of all students' sleeping arrangements in your house, so please confirm these, particularly if there are students from alternative organisations. They need to have a comfortable bed with clean, warm bedding, somewhere to put their belongings and a table/desk and chair (with lighting) for working if necessary.

5. Bathroom

Students from Asia prefer to shower than take a bath. Discuss suitable times for them to use the bathroom, and make sure your student knows how to use the shower (eg shower curtain!), toilet facilities, and where to put any rubbish. It may be prudent to suggest a maximum time for a shower – say, five minutes. Ask them to leave the bathroom clean and tidy. Also, if appropriate, make sure you explain the arrangements for disposing of sanitary items.

6. Meals

Talk to your student about mealtimes, as **food is probably the BIGGEST area of comment** by students! Although they may not express it, good home-cooked food is hugely appreciated! Students are paying for full board accommodation, and as a guide will expect the following:

Breakfast - Teenage students are often ready for a lie-in in the mornings and therefore a late breakfast is common. They will be used to cereal and toast and perhaps should be offered an egg. At the weekend, an English cooked breakfast often goes down well! **Lunch** can be a light meal, soup and bread, or sandwiches, or cheese on toast, with some salad, fruit or a yoghurt, etc.

Dinner should ideally be taken with the family, and consist of a full cooked meal of chicken, fish or red meat with vegetables and a dessert/fruit. Chinese students eat less red meat but rice, noodles and pasta are popular. Ask what they would like, and they may even like to cook a meal!

Snacks – Students should not expect to help themselves and ‘snack’ in between meals, but encourage them to ask. If hungry (teenagers are often growing fast!) something like biscuit or cake or some fruit should be available. A hot drink and a biscuit before going to bed would be appreciated, especially if the dinner is early.

Sometimes, the student’s **table manners** cause a little concern. Remember, for some of them, they have only just become accustomed to using a knife and fork (they may have only used chopsticks before). Please respect this difficulty but at the same time try to offer some sensitive guidance. Their guidelines ask them not to leave the table until everyone has finished and to carry the plates out to the kitchen at the end of the meal.

7. Laundry

Particularly over a half-term, students will have some laundry. Please let your student know where they can put their laundry and the days that you use your machine.

8. Curfew and Bedtimes

Quest operates a curfew policy that requires students to be home at a reasonable time in the evening:

Aged under 14	<i>Must be accompanied by an adult member of host family</i>
Aged 14	Home by 8pm or before dark, whichever is the earlier
Aged 15-16	Home by 10pm
Ages 17-18	Home by 11pm

These curfew times can be extended for specific purposes (eg a cinema trip) provided this is pre-arranged and with your agreement. As the host, you should ensure that you always know the whereabouts of your visitor, how they are getting home, and how you can contact them and they you.

Bedtimes are at the discretion of the host, but do bear in mind that Asian students in particular can be in the habit in their own homes of staying up until the early hours, often on their computers. Students should be urged, even required, to go to bed at times that are the custom in your home.

9. Household and Car Insurance

Quest Guardians Ltd has professional liability and indemnity insurance, but host families must have household contents insurance. Standard policies include cover for accidental damage by visitors and third party liability insurance. Please inform your Insurer that you will have a student visitor in your home. Standard car insurance policies cover the holder for a minimum of third party claims whilst the car is being used for domestic, social and pleasure purposes, but not for business. If in doubt, you should consult your insurer.

10. Child Protection

The safety and welfare of children, or Child Protection, means protecting children from physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. Quest Guardians is committed to the protection of all children in its care.

Our aim is to ensure at all times a caring and secure environment in which students feel safe, respected and valued. We have a policy of trust, openness and clear communication between students, school and Quest Guardians staff and our Host Families, so that the student's welfare is the top priority. If you have any concerns, the **Child Protection Officer** is Mr Chris Michelmores, mobile 07831 876416.

As a host family, you will be expected to protect the students that you host and you will be required to have a valid Criminal Records Bureau disclosure.

11. Some 'not negotiables'

We encounter few problems and in the list below Points "c", "d" and "e" are very rare

- a. Staying away overnight is forbidden unless specific permission has been given by Quest Guardians, normally with the consent of the student's own parents.
- b. Friends of students are not allowed to stay with you unless Quest Guardians has approved temporary guardianship. This is for legal and insurance reasons.
- c. Students are not allowed to smoke and may only drink alcohol with your express permission and under your supervision.
- d. Drugs are strictly forbidden at all times. If you have a concern over drugs, please contact us immediately.
- e. Hair dyeing and body piercing is forbidden.

12. Hot tips – suggested by hosts for hosts

Firstly, **DON'T WORRY** if the students want to spend some time 'chilling out', lying in or playing computer games. School life can be very busy, and some relaxation time is often what is needed. Please treat your student, as you would wish your own children to be treated if they were staying with a host family, and hosting will be a rewarding experience.

Most students are interested in the host family they are staying with and like to chat about experiences in their own country and here. But they are away from home and in unfamiliar surroundings, and time can pass slowly. It is good to involve them in helping you around the house, perhaps asking them to set the table, fill the water jug, calling other students or family members to the table, make tea or coffee for everyone and hand round the biscuits, etc. Try them on a few of the following family activities:

- Cinema visit
- Visit to town centre, supermarket or local shopping centre – they love shopping!
- Physical Exercise: swimming, tennis, football, basketball, bicycle ride

- Arts: – painting, drawing, music – many students play a musical instrument
- Cooking - Looking up recipes, get them involved in a menu for dinner!
- Helping around the house and garden, assisting in washing the car, hanging out washing, sweeping leaves, or posting letters in the nearby post-box.
- Crafts – One host taught students to knit and held a ‘knitting a scarf competition’. Other hosts have made Christmas decorations, cards, sewing napkins
- Seasonal Events - Pumpkins for Halloween, Guy and bonfire for November 5th
- Nature - Making nesting boxes for birds out of odd pieces of wood, planting seeds
- Games - Monopoly, Scrabble and games to help improve the student’s English vocabulary – e.g. how many items can you name in the kitchen, garden, bathroom, etc.

If you have any concerns either before or during your student’s homestay, please do not hesitate to contact us.

FINANCIAL and ADMINISTRATION

Housekeeping Allowance

We have a standard rate per night, which will be clarified with you. Normally we are able to confirm in advance, and in writing, the amount you will be paid for the student’s stay. Should there be a cancellation, we will do our best to find another student but, if not, and less than 3 days notice is given, we will pay a cancellation fee.

Expenses

Quest Guardians will pay your mileage if you collect the student from school (currently 40p per mile). If the student has no pocket money we can also cover the cost of the student’s entrance for activities such as swimming, cinema or a visit to an attraction or National Trust property (normally to a maximum of £20, but please ring if in doubt). **All claims should be supported by itemized receipts and sent to the office as expenses are added to the parents’ account.**

Arrangements regarding the student, school and transfer times will be confirmed to you in writing, prior to arrival.

Payment is made direct to your bank, using the BACS system. The payment will normally arrive in your account on the Friday **after** the end of the event (ie Exeat or Half Term).

Legal Contractual Arrangements

Please note that due to the guardianship contractual arrangements between Quest Guardians, students and their parents, ALL ARRANGEMENTS must be done through the Quest Guardians Offices.

And finally....

.....thank you for agreeing to hosting our students. We aim to make it a positive experience for both hosts and visitors. Your feedback is always welcome.



Quest Guardians Ltd

Email: office@questguardians.co.uk

Office Hours 01202 882299

Emergency: 07831 876416