

Guardians — UK —

PARENT HANDBOOK



Welcome

Welcome to Guardians UK; we are really looking forward to getting to know you and working with you over the coming years whilst you are caring for our students. Guardians UK is run by Helen Lewis who has over 20 years' experience in international education and who understands the importance of nurture and care for children and young people.



AIMS, PRINCIPLES & PRACTICE

Guardians UK cares for your child as if they were our own. We act as the bridge between parents and school: liaising with both, caring for students, and making practical arrangements, all of which enable your child to thrive. By spending time getting to know your child, meeting up with them regularly and maintaining contact with them, we respond quickly and effectively to their needs, to your requests, to the school and in support of our Host Families. Guardians UK staff always act professionally to support all our stakeholders and foster genuine friendships with those in our care.

WHAT IS A GUARDIAN?

Good boarding schools and colleges in the UK insist that all international students have a guardian. A guardian is an adult, based in the UK, who acts independently of the school, caring for the student's welfare, practical needs and academic progression. Having a responsible adult independent of the school and 'in loco parentis' to ensure that students are happy and progressing academically is crucial for the best possible educational experience. UK.

CONTACT DETAILS

Email is our preferred method of contact especially when informing us of travel details or requesting our services in any way:

✉ info@guardiansuk.com

We also welcome calls via the landline during UK time office hours. In an emergency phone the same number, listen to the message and press 1 to be redirected to our emergency mobile:

📞 **+44 (0) 1823 703199**

If we are not able to take your call immediately, please leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

As well as explaining more about Guardians UK, our website contains links to enquiry and registration forms and displays our policies for you to read: www.guardiansuk.com

WHY GUARDIANS UK?

Guardians UK provides a premier service to parents, students and schools by building up a positive and caring rapport with the student, offering excellent pastoral care, pairing them up with welcoming host families, mentoring and supporting the student academically, helping them to successfully navigate the next stages of their education, supporting them if they remain in the UK during the holidays and communicating frequently and openly with parents.



KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE

Guardians UK is fully committed to keeping your child safe and secure whilst in the UK. All Guardians UK staff receive extensive ongoing training in Child Protection and Safeguarding and fully understand their responsibilities in this area. Our staff are also trained in the current Prevent/Anti-Radicalisation framework, know how to respond to any concerns or complaints and understand the Guardians UK Anti-Bullying, Online Safety, Missing Student and Data Protection Policies.



Guardians UK employs a range of highly-trained professionals to work alongside your child whether they be the Administrator, the Regional Guardian, the host family or the driver. They have all been appropriately screened and checked both before employment and at regular intervals during their employment. Guardians UK follows its Safer Recruitment Policy very closely. All staff know exactly how to raise any Safeguarding concerns as we all have your child's safety at the heart of our service to you. In the case of a contagious pandemic such as Covid-19, Guardians UK follows current UK government advice and supports you and your child.



The Guardians UK Emergency Contingency Policy outlines the steps to be taken and Guardians UK upholds the AEGIS Covid-19 Safe Charter. More details can be found at www.guardiansuk.com

All of our policies are available to download from our website www.guardiansuk.com and upon request.



Services Provided

REGIONAL GUARDIANS

Once you have registered your child with us and we know which UK school they are attending we appoint a Regional Guardian to care for your child. They will visit your child within a few days of their arrival and help them through their first few days and weeks, offering pastoral support and genuine care. If your child feels homesick the Regional Guardian can support and help, working together with the school.

From our own experience of international students settling into new schools in the UK, we strongly recommend that you don't stay close to your child's school after taking them there at the start of term. Although you may think this will help your child to settle in, in fact it has the opposite effect and makes it more difficult for them to settle and start to make new friends. Do stay and help them unpack their things and meet their house staff but then it is important for you to leave and let them fully integrate into new routines. Also, try not to be in contact with them too much over the first few weeks as this will help them to adjust more quickly. In your child's initial meeting with their Regional Guardian they look through the Student Handbook together, discuss anything the student is unclear about including the Student Behaviour guidelines and then your child will be asked to sign to show they have understood Guardians UK expectations. Your child is given a paper copy of the Student Handbook and the Student Behaviour guidelines to keep. The guidelines cover the following key areas:

- Behaviour and arrangements when staying with a host family
- Appropriate sanctions
- Curfew arrangements
- UK law regarding alcohol, illegal drugs and substances and smoking
- UK law regarding sexual activity, tattoos and body piercings
- Arrangements when students wish to stay away from school and not with the host family

When away from school, your child is only allowed to stay with someone other than a host family if we receive appropriate email permission from you in advance. The person they are staying with must be an adult over the age of 25 who is known to the child. You need to provide us with information including the physical address of where they are staying, how long they are staying and how they are travelling to visit this person (we can help with this). These rules also apply to your child staying in a hotel; they are not allowed to do so unless accompanied by an adult approved by you who is over the age of 25.

The Regional Guardian regularly visits and communicates with your child to help build up a positive and open relationship, independent of the school. The Regional Guardian maintains regular communication with you so that you can keep up to date with how your child is settling in and progressing.

Your child's Regional Guardian, along with the Guardians UK Head Office team, maintains an open relationship with your child's school so that we can respond quickly to any problems or concerns before they become serious.

It can be hard for you if your child's birthday happens whilst they are away from home. Guardians UK are happy to liaise with the school and organise a birthday cake or possibly a meal out with friends (for older students) if you would like us to do that. Just email us in advance and we will organise it.

The Regional Guardian can attend school Parents' Meetings to discuss your child's academic progress with their individual teachers and then report back to you. If needed, and in consultation with the school, Guardians UK can source private tuition or help you access appropriate holiday courses if they are beneficial.

The Regional Guardian can, if required, support your child when they are involved in extracurricular activities; attending sports matches, school productions or concerts, just like

a local parent would. Furthermore, the Regional Guardian could, if necessary, escort your child to a medical or dental appointment outside of school or help them to buy any items they might need, such as school uniform, mobile phones, sports equipment or specialist kit for activities or trips.

Most schools provide pocket money services to their students so if you want to leave some money for your child at the start of term you can give the money to a member of staff and they will then give it to your child at regular intervals. If your child needs support with their finances the Regional Guardian can help them to open UK bank accounts, organise bank cards and set up online banking or, for younger students, can provide them with pocket money at regular intervals or when needed. Sometimes students need to register with health providers, police or other official bodies; your child's Regional Guardian will support them to do all of this. If your child needs any luggage stored over the holidays we can organise that too.

In fact, the Regional Guardian together with the host family, provides a wealth of advice on what it's like to live in the UK as a young person and both are there to support your child through this. In an emergency involving your child, the school or yourselves, Guardians UK provides an on call emergency response so that the issue can be resolved as quickly and easily as possible.

HOST FAMILIES

Guardians UK appoints a fully inspected host family to look after your child when they are unable to board at school but remain in the UK. Host families normally live within an hour of the student's school and look after one or more (maximum 3) students, providing them with the sort of care and attention they would give to their own children of a similar age. Guardians UK understands how important it is for your child to feel safe, comfortable and 'at home' whilst staying with their host family and that is why we always try to ensure your child stays with the same host family each time.

This means they can start to develop a positive and open relationship with the host family and make the most of living in the UK when not at school.

Before registering your child with Guardians UK, we like to spend time talking to you and getting to know you, partly to help us find out your preferences for the type of host family your child might like. This should help both the child and the host family get on well together from the very first visit. The Regional Guardian introduces your child to their host family prior to their first visit and ensures your child feels comfortable in the host family's home. If you accompany your child to school on their first day and would like to meet the Regional Guardian and the host family too, we can try to arrange that for you.

Your child might need to stay with their host family during exeat weekends (special 'holiday' weekends during term time), half-term holidays or at the start and end of terms if their flights home don't quite match the term dates. If they become unwell and the school cannot look after them or if they have been sanctioned and received a suspension or exclusion and need to leave school, Guardians UK organises a host family for your child at short notice. Where possible we will of course continue to use your child's regular host family but, because of the short notice of these events, this is not always possible. If this were the case, we would find an alternative host family and introduce your child to them.

If for any reason your child does not get on well with their host family, we can work together to sort out the problems and make improvements or find an alternative family if needed.

After each host family stay and once back at school the Regional Guardian discusses the visit with your child. These comments will be used to support the child's next homestay visit and, if appropriate, shared with the host family.

The host family provides your child with a 'home from home'. They provide a welcoming environment and three good meals each day along with laundry facilities, wifi connectivity and an opportunity to experience life in a regular UK household. Your child will have their own nicely decorated single bedroom unless they have specifically chosen, and you have given written permission, for them to share with a friend of a similar age and gender. Each bedroom has suitable clothes storage along with a lamp, desk and chair for studying. They may either have their own

en-suite bathroom or share the family one. They also have access to the shared areas of the house such as the kitchen, dining room and sitting room and, dependent on their age, can help themselves to snacks and drinks during the day.

During their stay with the host family your child is looked after as if they were one of the family. Dependent upon their age, they might be expected to keep their own room tidy, sort their dirty laundry ready for washing, help set up and clear away the table at mealtimes and take part in trips and activities. Age-specific guidelines are given to the host family regarding appropriate outings, bedtimes, use of the wifi, whether or for how long the student is left alone in the house or whether the student can go out alone and these are also explained to your child prior to their first visit by the Regional Guardian.

If your child causes any damage or loss to the host family's home or property, then we will inform you of that and ask you to pay for the repair or replacement. The cost will be debited from the Student Expense Account. You should then be able to claim that money back from your own insurance company. Each host family is different. Some consist of a family unit with parents and younger or teenage children still at home whilst others are older couples or single people whose children might have grown up and left the home.

Several Guardians UK host families have household pets such as cats or dogs and these are often very much part of the family too.

When requesting your child stays with a host family you need to provide Guardians UK with written notice at least four weeks before the scheduled stay so that we can make sure the host family is ready to receive them. In fact, many parents inform us of their child's holiday plans at the start of the school year which is very helpful. If your plans change and you no longer require the services of a host family, we need to receive that confirmation via email. We do have to charge a 50% cancellation fee if you cancel within two weeks of the planned visit and this is passed on to our homestay.

If an unplanned stay needs to be organised (flight problems, illness or sanction) Guardians UK responds to requests from the school or parents as quickly as possible and aims to secure a homestay location within 24 hours.

All our host families have undergone police checks and been approved, and Safer Recruitment guidelines followed before employment with Guardians UK, so you can be assured that your child will be appropriately looked after during any home stays. Furthermore, all host family homes are checked regularly to ensure that they conform to UK health and safety standards.

TRANSPORT

When your child first arrives in the UK, if requested, one of the Guardians UK drivers meets and collects the student at the airport. We inform you in advance exactly who the driver is by emailing you their name and photo so that your child knows who to look out for. The driver also displays a Guardians UK sign in the airport Arrivals Hall with your child's name written on it. If your child is using the airline's Unaccompanied Minor Service our driver collects them from the appropriate airline staff and signs any documents.

Upon arrival at school the driver accompanies the student into the building, helping with the child's luggage and introducing them to their Houseparent or appropriate member of staff before departing. Similar procedures are followed at the start and end of terms or whenever your child needs to be transported somewhere.

When requesting transport within the UK you need to inform Guardians UK by email at least four weeks in advance so that we can make the necessary arrangements.

Guardians UK needs to know flight numbers, flight times, arrival and departure airports for each journey your child is making. For younger children (under 16 years old) we always recommend using our drivers for any journeys they wish to make. For young people 16 years old or older, and with parents' permission, we are generally happy to book taxis or trains or coach tickets if they wish to travel within the UK.

Please note it is your responsibility to book international airline flights for your child.

These journeys are typically to and from the airport at the start and end of term or to and from your child's host family's house at halfterms or exeat weekends. Guardians UK can also organise transport for your child to attend an Open Day at another school or university if they are considering their next step in education or if they wish to travel to visit a friend or relation at any time. If requested the Regional Guardian can accompany your child on a school or university visit too, just like a local parent would. All these requests need to come by email to Guardians UK four weeks in advance.

Whilst we provisionally organise transport in response to a child's request we only confirm those requests once we have had written confirmation from the child's parents.

All our drivers have been fully checked and approved before employment with Guardians UK and Safer Recruitment guidelines followed so you can be assured that your child will be appropriately looked after during any of their journeys organised by Guardians UK.

FEES

Guardians UK fees are listed in our Booklet and can be found on our website

 www.guardiansuk.com

Guardians UK offers a choice of 3 different packages depending upon the needs of your child. There is no variation in quality when it comes to the care and safeguarding of your child.

Your child must also have a Student Expense Account to cover optional services, such as airport transfers and host family stays, when needed and for emergencies. Any money remaining in this account when the child leaves our guardianship will be refunded within one month of the child leaving, having deducted any outstanding fees or expenses.

Summary:

Guardians UK works 'in loco parentis' on your behalf to support your child during their time in the UK education system and our aim is to work closely with you to get to know you and your child during your time with us. We always work in the best interest of the child and seek your permission whenever possible before making any important decisions. However, there may be times when we are unable to contact you and a quick decision needs to be made to support your child at school, when they are travelling or whilst staying with a host family and then we make that decision on your behalf and inform you as soon as possible of that decision. It is therefore vital that you keep us up to date with any issues affecting your child. A medical form needs to be completed before we can accept your child and you need to inform us immediately of any changes to their medical needs such as allergies or important medication so that we can keep your child safe and secure and liaise closely with their school.

From time to time we may need to ask you to complete a questionnaire for our accreditation with AEGIS (The Association for the Education and Guardianship of International Students), an accreditation body which brings together schools and colleges to ensure and promote the welfare of international students studying at UK schools and colleges.

If you are not happy for any reason with the services provided by Guardians UK, please do let us know in the first instance and we will try to change things to better support you and your child. If you are still not happy you can find the Guardians UK Complaints Policy on our website or upon request and follow the procedures set out in that.

As detailed in our Terms & Conditions if you wish to terminate your agreement with Guardians UK you need to give a full term's written notice by email.

Contact Details

YOUR FIRST POINT OF CONTACT IS
YOUR REGIONAL GUARDIAN

✉ info@guardiansuk.com

🌐 www.guardiansuk.com

📞 Head Office: 01823 703199

📞 Emergency: 01823 703199 ext. 1

Helen Lewis, Director

✉ helen.lewis@guardiansuk.com

📞 01823 703190

Guardians
— UK —

YOUR CHILD IS OUR PRIORITY.

WWW.GUARDIANSUK.COM

Guardians UK, a division of Taunton School Educational Charity.
Registered Charity no 1081420. Registered in England and Wales Co. No 4005803.
Registered Office: Staplegrove Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 6AD, United Kingdom