

# Guardians — UK —

## STUDENT HANDBOOK



# Welcome

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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 the 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 the child to thrive.

By spending time getting to know the 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 your welfare, practical needs and academic progression. You will meet your Regional Guardian soon after arriving at school and they will introduce you to Guardians UK, tell you what we do and help you to settle in to your new school. If you have any questions or worries when you are at school, your Regional Guardian will be able to help. Your Regional Guardian is independent of the school but will communicate with the school and with your parents to best help and support you. It's like having another parent, but one who is in the UK.

## WHY GUARDIANS UK?

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

## WHAT IS A HOST FAMILY?

Guardians UK appoints a fully inspected host family to look after you when you are unable to board at school but remain in the UK. At exeat (occasional weekends when the school closes) or half-term holidays you will probably stay in the UK and go to live with one of our host families.

Guardians UK understands how important it is for you to feel safe, comfortable and 'at home' whilst staying with your host family and that is why we always try to ensure you stay with the same host family each time. This means you can start to develop a positive and open relationship with your host family and make the most of living in the UK when not at school.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

Don't worry, Guardians UK will show you what you need to do at any time so please ask us if you are unsure. We understand that it can be difficult for you at a new school and in a new country and we are here to support you when you first arrive and throughout your education in the UK. When you first meet your Regional Guardian, you will talk through how Guardians UK can help you by:

- Responding to you at any time of the day or night in an emergency;
- Settling you into school and supporting you if you feel unhappy or homesick;
- Visiting and messaging you regularly to make sure you are happy and helping you with anything of concern;
- Talking with your school if you have a concern over your academic progress or are worried about a pastoral matter;
- Helping to care for you if you become sick;
- Helping you if you receive sanctions from the school and need to find alternative accommodation for a while;
- Introducing and pairing you up with a suitable host family;
- Making sure you have everything you need or helping you buy things such as sports equipment, musical instruments, sim cards, appropriate electrical adaptors;
- Booking public transport, taxis or a Guardians UK driver if you are aged 16 or over; booking taxis or a Guardians UK driver if you are aged under 16;
- Assisting you through UK airport check-in procedures and meeting you when you arrive back in the airport at the start of each term when using Guardians UK transport;
- Organising visits to school or university Open Days to help you plan your future;
- Attending school parents meetings with you and providing written feedback to your parents;
- Sourcing extra tuition if needed;
- Watching and supporting you in school functions such as productions, concerts or sports matches;
- Helping you open a bank account, register with health providers or the police;
- Providing you with pocket money if needed;
- Storing luggage for you during the school holidays;

The most important things for you to do is to stay in regular contact with your Regional Guardian and to contact them whenever you need help or support so that relatively small problems can be sorted out before they become big problems.

You will need to read through the Guardians UK A-Z of Behaviour Guidelines with your Regional Guardian and they can be found in the following pages of this document. These outline the positive behaviour we expect from you when staying with a host family, for example, and provide guidance for you regarding your expectations.

## WHAT DO I DO IF I NEED HELP?

At your first meeting your Regional Guardian will provide you with a phone number and an email address to get in contact with them. Use these contact details during the day if you've got a nonurgent problem or request.

If you're wanting to request transport, a host family stay or another service then you can email us on:

✉ [info@guardiansuk.com](mailto:info@guardiansuk.com)

You can also call Guardians UK via the landline during UK time office hours:

☎ **+44 (0) 1823 703199**

**In an emergency call that same number, listen to the message, choose ext. 1 and you will be able to speak to the member of staff on duty.**

Helen Lewis is the Guardians UK Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). She is trained and experienced in dealing with keeping children and young people safe. If Helen is not able to take your call immediately please leave a message and she 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](http://www.guardiansuk.com)

There are other organisations you can call if you need help or support for any reason:

### **Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership:**

☎ +44 (0) 300 123 2224

🌐 <https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk>

A government partnership responsible for safeguarding children and young people in Somerset.

### **Children's Commissioner for England:**

☎ +44 (0) 20 7783 8330

🌐 [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

Independent spokesperson who promotes and protects the rights of children and young people.

### **Cardiff & the Vale Regional Safeguarding Children Board:**

☎ +44 (0) 29 2053 6490

🌐 [www.cardiffandvalersb.co.uk](http://www.cardiffandvalersb.co.uk)

A government partnership responsible for safe-guarding children and young people around Cardiff.

### **Children's Commissioner for Wales:**

☎ +44 (0) 800 801 1000

🌐 [www.childcomwales.org.uk](http://www.childcomwales.org.uk)

Independent spokesperson who promotes and protects the rights of children and young people. Contact details for LSCBs in other regions are provided as necessary.

### **Childline:**

☎ +44 (0) 800 1111

🌐 [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

Childline offers free, confidential advice and support whatever your worry, whenever you need help.

The police in the UK can be contacted by dialling 101. **In an emergency always contact the police by dialling 999.**

# A-Z of Behaviour Guidelines

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## ALCOHOL

You can be stopped, fined or arrested by the police if you're under 18 and drinking alcohol in public. If you're under 18, it's against the law for someone to sell you alcohol, to buy or try to buy alcohol, for an adult to buy or try to buy alcohol for you and to drink alcohol in pubs or restaurants. If you're 16 or 17 and accompanied by an adult, you can drink (but not buy) beer, wine or cider with a meal. This is the law surrounding alcohol in the UK. Guardians UK students are expected to follow the same rules, but we discourage all under 18-year olds from drinking at all. Students 18 years or older may drink a small amount with a meal if appropriate.

## ANTI-BULLYING & CYBERBULLYING POLICY

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, which hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers and tablets. Both types can be defined by the victim not the perpetrator. Guardians UK does not tolerate any form of bullying and encourages its young people, whether victim or observer, to speak up if they experience it happening. The Guardians UK Anti-bullying and Cyberbullying Policy is available on the website [www.guardiansuk.com](http://www.guardiansuk.com) or upon request.

## APPLE PAY, CASH & BANK CARDS

Many people in the UK now use Apple Pay through their mobile phones instead of bank cards or cash. It's useful as it means you don't need to carry cash or cards but not all shops and restaurants accept this form of payment, so you need to have a bank card and/or some cash with you if you are shopping or going out.

## ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES

It may seem obvious but don't forget your passport! When using Guardians UK transport, your driver will be waiting for you at arrivals with a Guardians UK sign with your name on it. If you have any problems finding them, you can ring the emergency number **+44 (0) 1823 703199** ext. 1.

## BRP (BIOMETRIC RESIDENT PERMIT) & POLICE REGISTRATION

If you are studying in the UK on a Tier 4 visa, your BRP should arrive at your school or a local collection point soon after you do. Your school along with Guardians UK will help you to collect this if necessary. Bank accounts – Guardians UK, with the support of your school, can help you to set up a UK bank account along with appropriate methods of payment.

## BED TIMES

Your school will normally specify what time you should be in bed and what time your lights should go out each evening. When staying with your host family the timings will be similar although they might be a little more relaxed as it will be school holiday time, and will be dependent upon your age.

## BEHAVIOUR

The most important thing is to show respect for other people, property and yourself. If you do this, you will bring credit to yourself.

## BIRTHDAYS

Guardians UK would like to help you celebrate your birthday whether you're at school or staying with a host family. Let us know what you might like to do and we can try to organise it for you.

## BODY PIERCINGS

UK law does not state a minimum age for most types of body piercings, although many salons will ask for proof of identity to check your age before proceeding. Most UK boarding schools have their own rules on this matter. Guardians UK recommends that students wanting piercings should have them done in their home countries following discussion with their family.

## BRITISH CUSTOMS AND ETIQUETTE

You will notice that British culture and habits might be different to your own ones. In Britain it is popular for people to queue and wait their turn, ask politely using 'please' and 'thank you', be friendly and helpful, say sorry quite a lot, cover their mouths when sneezing or coughing and show respect to others. Try to do the same.

## CHILD PROTECTION & SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Guardians UK believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and keep them safe. All our staff are trained in safeguarding and our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy is available on our website [www.guardiansuk.com](http://www.guardiansuk.com) or upon request. If you think you or someone else is at risk of being harmed or has been harmed in the past tell a member of Guardians UK or someone at your school. We can support you.

## CONTACT DETAILS

Remember to add Guardians UK and your host family contact details to your mobile phone so you can always call us in an emergency or to let us know you might be late or that your plans have changed.

## CURFEWS

When staying with your host family you may wish to go out somewhere. Whatever your age you need to let the host family know your plans. If you are under 16 years old, you generally need to be accompanied whereas if you are 16 years or older you can travel more independently. Always tell your host family where you are going and who you are going with. Your host family will let you know what time they expect you to return (curfew) and you need to stick to that. If for any reason you are late you must phone the host family and explain. If you have any problems whilst out, call the host family and/or the Guardians UK number **+44 (0)1823 703199**.

## DRESS

When staying with your host family make sure you dress appropriately and don't cause any embarrassment to members of the family. Staying in your pyjamas all day for example is generally not appropriate.

## DRIVING

Once you are 17 years old in the UK you can start to learn to drive. Most schools have good links with approved driving instructors and allow their students to have driving lessons during the school day. Guardians UK can help you to organise these and you would be able to continue having lessons whilst at your homestay if practical.

## DRUGS & SUBSTANCES

Guardians UK are committed to ensuring and promoting the health and safety of its young people and, if necessary, will act to safeguard their wellbeing. The possession, use and supply of controlled drugs, including new psychoactive substances, and the paraphernalia of drugs or similar substances intended for misuse are forbidden.



## ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

You will notice that electrical sockets are different in Britain to most other countries. We prefer you to purchase cables with British style plugs for your electronic goods and can help you do this. If this is not possible then you must use an adaptor or multi-way bar extension lead which is fused. Never fit an international style plug straight into a UK style socket and do not overload sockets with too many electronic gadgets.

## EXCURSIONS

If you are one of our younger children then your host family will organise different things for you to do whilst you are staying with them. They will probably take you on trips with their own children if they have them and you might do new things and have a fun time. Older children may prefer staying in a host family which is quieter and where they can study and revise more easily. Guardians UK will discuss your preferences with you before choosing an appropriate host family.

## FIRE SAFETY

Whether you are at school or staying with a host family always take care to prevent a fire from starting. Don't burn candles in your bedroom or use matches or lighters. Don't overload electric sockets, don't leave your laptop charging on the bed nor your hair straighteners switched on. If a fire does start, make sure you and everyone in the household are safe.

## HOST FAMILIES

Your host family will look after you when you are not staying in the school and make you feel at home. Communicate openly with them, be sociable, respect their house and enjoy the time you spend with them.

## HOMESICKNESS

It is perfectly normal to feel a bit homesick now and again. After all, you are in a different country, probably using a different language and meeting new people all the time whilst trying to work hard at your studies. It can be tough! If you do feel homesick or unhappy please tell someone – either at school or within Guardians UK. We will all support and try to help you.

## LANGUAGE

Your host family will encourage you to speak English when you are staying with them. Don't worry if your English isn't very good, your host family will be able to understand you and your English will improve.

## LAUNDRY

Your school will explain how the laundry system works in your boarding house. When staying with a host family, depending upon your age, you will probably be asked to put your dirty clothes in a laundry basket and they will be washed for you. If you normally organise your own washing and are happy to keep doing so that may be possible; you'll just need to discuss it with your host family.

## MEALS

Your host family will provide you with three good meals each day. If there are foods that you cannot eat or that you don't really like, then please let your host family know. If you enjoy cooking, you may be able to help in the kitchen so ask if you would like to. Try new and different foods, be polite, use the cutlery provided and socialise with your family whilst eating. If you are over 18 and offered a small alcoholic drink with your meal, you may accept if you wish to.

## MEDICAL ISSUES

Your school will normally register you with a doctor's surgery and provide medical facilities within the school and explain how to access them. If you are too ill to stay in the boarding house but not ill enough to be in hospital we may be asked if your host family can look after you.

If you feel ill whilst staying with your host family tell them so that they can decide if you need to see a pharmacist, doctor, or go to hospital for treatment. Your parents obviously get worried if you are ill so it's important that you tell us so that we can help you and then reassure your parents that you are receiving appropriate medical care.

If you don't want to say exactly what is wrong with you because it's a personal matter that's fine, you can attend medical appointments by yourself, but please still tell us you are feeling unwell.

If you have been in contact with someone suffering from Covid-19 or are experiencing typical Covid-19 symptoms yourself (high temperature; new continuous cough and/or change to your sense of smell or taste) you must inform your school or host family immediately.

## MOBILE PHONES

Your school will probably have rules about appropriate use of mobile phones and you'll be told what those are. When staying with a host family leave your phone in your bedroom when you come down for meals or when you are socialising. It is considered rude to be on your phone during a meal or when doing an activity with others. When you go out make sure your phone is fully charged and switched on so that your host family can contact you if there is a problem. Make sure you have your host family's contact number in your phone as well as the Guardians UK number **+44 (0)1823 703199** in case of difficulties. Look after your mobile phone carefully, keep it passcode protected and don't let anyone else know the passcode.

## MONEY

Make sure you always have some cash with you when you go out as you can't always pay with your phone or bank cards. For example, some taxis only accept cash payments. Keep small denomination notes in your wallet or purse; £50 notes are not always accepted. Look after your cash carefully and don't leave it lying around. If you run out of money and need some urgently to stay safe, call the Guardians UK number **+44 (0)1823 703199** and we can help. If you need more money for school trips and events, then speak with your Regional Guardian and they should be able to authorise some on your parents' behalf.



## ONLINE SAFETY POLICY

Guardians UK has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and keep them safe. Our Online Safety Policy is available on our website [www.guardiansuk.com](http://www.guardiansuk.com) or upon request and your school will have similar guidelines in transit with our drivers or whilst staying with your host family we want you to remain safe online. Make sure your social media privacy settings are correct, be careful about sharing personal information on the internet, set strict limits on who can track your location, do not chat to strangers online and never take inappropriate photos of yourself and share them. Taking sexual photos of yourself or others is against the law in the UK and can result in police involvement.

## PARTIES

If you want to go to a party during term time you need to inform your Regional Guardian in advance and they will then decide if to give permission or not. Unless you are 18 years old or over you are not allowed to drink alcohol, nor is anyone permitted to take drugs or other illegal or legal substances. To get permission to attend there would have to be a responsible adult present throughout the party and you would need to provide their contact details to Guardians

## PERSONAL SAFETY

Guardians UK guiding principle is to care for you whilst you are in the UK therefore your personal safety is of the utmost importance to us. Avoid situations in which you feel uncomfortable, don't be afraid to say 'no', respect yourself and other people and speak to us whenever you feel like it – we will always listen and offer support without judging you.

## PERSONAL HYGIENE

Maintaining good hygiene habits is important so remember to shower at least once a day especially after sport, wash your hair regularly, put your dirty clothes in the laundry every day and put on clean ones, use appropriate toiletries and change your bedding each week. Follow the same hygiene habits when staying with your host family.

## PREVENT/ANTI-RADICALISATION POLICY

Along with your school, Guardians UK actively works to keep you safe from radicalisation and prevent you from being exposed to extremism. Guardians UK upholds fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Our Prevent / Anti-Radicalisation Policy is available on our website [www.guardiansuk.com](http://www.guardiansuk.com) or upon request.

## PRIVACY

Your right to privacy is very important to us. Whilst staying with your host family you will have your own bedroom, unless you have specifically asked to share a room, and a bathroom with a lock. Your host family will respect your right to privacy in both places but will also encourage you to join in with the family at certain other times. You'll also use your host family's kitchen and living areas (dining room sitting room) but you are not expected to go into their bedrooms, en-suite bathrooms or office rooms. Neither should you use the household computer or other devices without asking.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

If you want to travel somewhere at a weekend or attend an Open Day at another school or university then contact Guardians UK and we can either organise a Guardians UK driver for you or, if you are aged 16 or over, book public transport tickets or a taxi for you. We'll also organise transport for you to travel to and from a UK airport at the start and end of terms and to get to and from your host family.

## RELIGION

Your school might expect you to attend religious services on a daily or weekly basis or might organise for you to attend other places of worship in the locality if you wish to. If you want to be able to attend religious services or events whilst staying with your host family, inform Guardians UK in advance and we can try to organise that for you. Your host family might attend religious services, but you will not have to accompany them if you do not wish to.

## ROUTINES

Your daily routine at school will be very busy so we appreciate that when you stay with your host family you may not want to get up too early or do too much. That is fine, particularly for older students who may have revision or school work to complete during their stay, but we would expect our younger students to play a more active role with your host family and participate in most things that are suggested to them. You are also expected to make your own bed each day and keep your room tidy.

## SCHOOL RULES

These vary depending upon which school you attend but will all encourage you to show care, consideration, mutual respect and tolerance. These values are similarly upheld by Guardians UK and we encourage all our young people to support them.

## SEXUAL ACTIVITY

UK law does not permit sexual intercourse in which one or both partners is under the age of 16. Most schools' rules go further than this and state that any sexual activity between students, of any age, will be treated as a serious offence. Whilst young people are in the care of Guardians UK the same principles apply regardless of the young person's age.

## SMOKING

UK law states you must be over 18 to buy cigarettes in the UK and if you're under 16 the police have the right to confiscate your cigarettes. It is illegal to have, give or sell cannabis to anyone. Most schools in the UK have a general non-smoking policy, including e-cigarettes, for staff and students and Guardians UK follows the same guidelines to include all students in their care, regardless of their age.



## TABLETS & LAPTOPS

When using your tablet or laptop remember to follow our Online Safety Policy which is available on our website [www.guardiansuk.com](http://www.guardiansuk.com) or upon demand and to follow any school guidelines too. When staying with your host family follow any house rules that they might have, such as only using your devices in the communal rooms, not using them at meal times and only using them for a limited amount of time. These guidelines are age dependent.

## TATTOOS

It is against the law in the UK to get a tattoo if you are under 18 years old and Guardians UK follows the same guidelines.

## TAXIS & DRIVERS

Guardians UK has several fully inspected and trained drivers and taxi companies which it uses. If you wish to travel somewhere and want Guardians UK to help you organise it then you need to inform your Regional Guardian or Head Office by emailing [info@guardiansuk.com](mailto:info@guardiansuk.com) in advance.

## TRAFFIC SAFETY

Always follow the law when travelling in the UK. Wear seat belts in cars, taxis and coaches or wherever they are fitted. Children under 12 years old and who measure less than 135cm tall must use a child car seat. As a pedestrian remember vehicles drive on the left in the UK so take great care when crossing the road; make sure you look the right way first and always try to use a pedestrian crossing.

## VALUABLE POSSESSIONS

Make sure you look after your phone, tablet, laptop, bank cards, cash and any other valuable items. At school you should have somewhere safe to keep those items and when you're staying with your host family you can keep them in your bedroom.

When you go out you should always take your fully charged mobile phone with you and make sure it is switched on, so you can be contacted if necessary. Be careful when carrying and using your phone when you're out and keep it safe.

## VISITORS & FRIENDS

Your school will have guidelines about having visitors and friends coming to visit you so make sure you know what those are. When staying with your host family, ask them if it is okay for a friend to visit. Normally you would spend time with your friend in the communal areas of the house rather than in your bedroom.

## WELLBEING

Your wellbeing and happiness is important to us at Guardians UK, and it is to your school too. We encourage you to share anything that might be of concern to you by speaking to one of us as early as you can. We promise to help you. If you want to tell us something in confidence, we can maintain that confidence unless we feel you would come to harm, in which case we are required to pass on the information to the appropriate person.

Helen Lewis is Guardians UK Designated Safeguarding Lead and would be informed if a staff member thinks you might come to harm.

The Guardians UK Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy explains this more fully and is available on our website [www.guardiansuk.com](http://www.guardiansuk.com) or upon request.

## WIFI USE

Your school will have a policy regarding internet use – it is important that you follow it. Your host family will have wifi access and will provide you with the name and password. Depending upon your age, certain restrictions may be placed upon your usage and it is vital you follow Guardians UK Online Safety Policy which is available on our website [www.guardiansuk.com](http://www.guardiansuk.com) or upon request.

# Contact Details

YOUR FIRST POINT OF CONTACT IS  
YOUR REGIONAL GUARDIAN

✉ [info@guardiansuk.com](mailto:info@guardiansuk.com)

🌐 [www.guardiansuk.com](http://www.guardiansuk.com)

📞 Head Office: 01823 703199

📞 Emergency: 01823 703199 ext. 1

**Helen Lewis, Director**

✉ [helen.lewis@guardiansuk.com](mailto:helen.lewis@guardiansuk.com)

📞 01823 703190

Guardians  
— UK —

YOUR CHILD IS OUR PRIORITY.

[WWW.GUARDIANSUK.COM](http://WWW.GUARDIANSUK.COM)

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