



HOMESTAY HANDBOOK

2024-2025

HIGHBRIDGE EDUCATION
13 Hanover Square, London, England, W1S 1HN

Welcome to HIGHBRIDGE EDUCATION!

Welcome to Highbridge Education and thank you for signing up with us as a host family! As a Highbridge Education host family, you are providing a very important service to our clients. As well as representing Highbridge Education you will play a large part in ensuring the students have an enjoyable time in the UK, in a safe and supportive environment.



This handbook is designed to be guide on what you can expect when hosting overseas students and what is expected of you as a host family.

You will be visited by a Highbridge Education staff member, who will be looking for warm, comfortable, safe and hygienic conditions conducive to study and relaxation. We rely on your continued support to enable us to deliver (and continue delivering) a high level of service - you are an essential partner, and we very much appreciate your input. The role of a host family and relationship with students can be a delicate one on both sides with a responsibility on both parties to understand and respect some cultural differences.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding anything mentioned below, please get in touch with us.

About Highbridge Education

Highbridge Education was established in the UK in 2019, with services covering regions such as London, Oxford, Cambridge, Reading, Windsor, Kent, Winchester, Brighton, York, Wales, and others. The company provides services including primary and secondary school Admission preparation, university applications, guardianship services, and academic tutoring. Our main aim is ensuring all students have a safe and enjoyable time in the UK, while reaching their full academic potential.

Contact details

There will be times that you need to contact us. We are always here to assist you with any questions or concerns that you may have. You can contact us in the following ways:

General enquiries	
Telephone (Monday to Friday: 09:00-17:00)	+44 (0)7917431865
Email	info@highuk.com
WeChat	Me79724
Emergencies 24/7	
Telephone	+44 (0)7917431865
Safeguarding concerns	
Designated Safeguarding Lead John Lee	+44 (0) 7824906975 manager@highuk.com
Deputy Designated Lead Michelle Lee	+44 (0)7917431865 info@highuk.com

Introduction to hosting students from overseas

Highbridge Education have a number of host families with whom we place our students when schools are closed for half terms, exeat weekends and occasionally Christmas, Easter and summer holidays. Host families are expected to exercise the same levels of care as a responsible parent, accepting the day-to-day responsibility for the care of the student (although actual guardianship remains with Highbridge Education).

We will match you as closely as possible to the student in terms of the student's requirements and interests. We try, where possible, to place students in the same host family for all their stays in order to provide consistency, but changes can occur.

Your visitor will normally be attending a private boarding school in the UK. During half terms and exeat weekends, the boarding houses close giving staff and students a break, and the students are required to have alternative accommodation arrangements. Parents often choose host family accommodation because it offers safety and a 'home away from home' in a family atmosphere, where students can practise their English, learn about another culture, and be treated as one of the family.

When your student first arrives at your home it is therefore important to be welcoming and understanding, as staying in an unfamiliar environment can be an anxious time for a young person whose family lives in another country. Although students will sometimes spend time in their room working or playing, access to your living areas to watch TV, chat with your family or relax is invaluable.

- **Language**

Most students are here in the UK to study for exams such as GCSEs and A-Levels, and their spoken English language is excellent. However, this is not always the case, and patience and understanding is required if students have a low level of English.

- **Culture**

Going to a new country and being part of a new culture can be confusing and difficult for some students. They will be used to certain British customs which they have experienced at school; however, it may be their first time living in a British home so please be patient and explain various customs if necessary. Please also be sensitive to different religious beliefs and requirements and provide a safe space for students to pray if needed.

The English love their pets, but this is not often shared by people from China and the Far East. Sometimes the students have had very little contact with any dogs or cats and consider them unhygienic and frightening. Please be sensitive to this, particularly when the student first arrives.

Your responsibilities as a host family

- **Student's Guardian**

During the times that you are hosting, your responsibilities are to protect, care for and provide food and lodging for your student on a day-to-day basis, as you would your own children. The overall guardianship responsibility remains with Highbridge Education, 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 affecting student safety, should be reported to Highbridge Education immediately.

- **School contact**

You will not normally be expected to instigate contact with a student's school or to attend school occasions, which is a role undertaken by Highbridge Education. If there was a need for the host to contact or visit the school, it would be at the instigation of Highbridge Education and with the agreement of the host.

- **Host Family requirements**

Highbridge Education requires the following documents from host families before we can place any students with you:

- A completed application form
- Passport copy for the main host
- Enhanced DBS Certificates for all persons aged 16 and over living at the premises*

- Gas safe certificate issued in the past 12 months
- 2 references (one personal, one professional from people who have known you for at least 2 years)
- Safeguarding certificate issued in the last 3 years (we can send you an online safeguarding course to complete if necessary)

*If you are not signed up to the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) update service, we will need to apply for the DBS certificates on your behalf and the fee (approx. £50 per certificate) will be payable by the host family. Copies of the following documents will be needed: passport, driving licence, proof of address and National Insurance number.

We will arrange a visit to your house where we will meet the family, have a look around your house and discuss any questions you have about hosting or child safety. We will also check that you have working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.

You will also be asked to sign a contract and complete a self-declaration and medical declaration form. Please provide us with at least one month's notice if you wish to terminate the contract.

We will visit you each year to ensure high standards are maintained. If there are any changes to the house, student facilities or household make up, it is your responsibility to let us know as soon as possible.

Please be aware that in some cases, a student's school may wish to visit your house, and an AEGIS representative may also ask to visit you at the time of a Highbridge Education inspection. Your cooperation at these times will be much appreciated.

Looking after and respecting the rights of the student

We host students aged between 8-18. Students of different ages may require different care. For example, younger students will require greater nurturing and supervision during their stay, whereas older students will be more independent and may be allowed to visit the local area on their own. Parental permissions may vary from student to student too. We will explain to you what we expect from you prior to placing any student with you.

One of the most mutually rewarding experiences of hosting an international student is learning about another culture. We ask that all homestays respect the students' own culture, values and background and be mindful that there will be some differences in the way students approach everyday life, such as when greeting others or whilst eating. Likewise, the students may have a

different religious belief to the homestay. Again, we ask that you are respectful of any differences.

Loco Parentis

We expect our homestays to exercise the same levels of care as a responsible parent – in loco parentis. This means that you are accepting the day-to-day responsibility for the care of the student whilst they are staying with you.

Codes of conduct

Highbridge Education has a code of conduct for staff and homestays. Please take time to read through this document as it outlines how staff and homestays are expected to behave whilst working for the guardianship organisation. These can be found

at :https://1drv.ms/f/c/453f3abb987ad97e/Eku5GiBrxR9Bk5BLmkb-KAcB56WnbXf6T19_avkvg4tumg?e=OAa6B9.

Likewise, we have a code of conduct for students. This outlines the expected standards of behaviour for our students. Please read through this as it will help you to understand our expectations. These can be found

at :https://1drv.ms/f/c/453f3abb987ad97e/Eku5GiBrxR9Bk5BLmkb-KAcB56WnbXf6T19_avkvg4tumg?e=OAa6B9.

Safeguarding

Highbridge Education is committed to safeguarding and child protection. We have comprehensive policies on safeguarding, prevent / anti-radicalisation, low level concerns, complaints, anti-bullying, missing student, online safety, and data protection that provide further information and outline our procedures. These can be found at :

<http://highuk.com/NewsDetail.aspx?ID=206>

Please ensure that you have read and understood all our policies.

You are required to undertake a basic certificated course on safeguarding. This should be refreshed every three years. We will also provide an annual safeguarding update. This will be via an online meeting.

We encourage students to talk to any trusted adult should they have any concerns. As a homestay, a student may consider you to be a trusted adult. There may be students who feel more comfortable speaking to other homestay family members about a concern they may have. You should therefore ensure that all members of your household are aware of what to do if a concern is shared with them. We have explained to students that any concerns they raise will be treated seriously. If a student comes to you or any homestay member to raise a concern, please ensure that it is dealt with in line with our published procedure (see safeguarding policy) and reported to our Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.

Self-Reporting

Our safeguarding policy and low-level concerns policy outline our procedures for handling an allegation against a member of staff or homestay. We encourage homestays to self-report to our DSL any situation which could appear compromising or be misconstrued, or where their behaviour has fallen below the standards required in the code of conduct.

Control

Homestays may only use reasonable, appropriate and lawful means of control to maintain safety. Under no circumstances should physical punishment ever be used.

Homesickness

When students arrive in the UK, they might be homesick.

Signs that they may be feeling homesick include:

- A strong desire to go home
- Feeling lonely
- Feeling sad
- Feeling anxious
- Lack of motivation
- Loss of confidence
- Feeling depressed
- Experiencing mood swings
- Feeling insecure
- Finding simple tasks difficult

- Physical symptoms, such as headaches and nausea

If your student is showing signs of homesickness, tell them not to worry as there are many people who can help them manage their feelings. Let them talk to you about their feelings and remind them that they can always talk to their house parent, teacher, parent, guardian, or any member of guardian staff who will listen and will be able to support them and offer advice. It is best not to encourage them to frequently call home, as this can make the feelings worse. Keeping the student busy and interested in a variety of family activities and discussions may help them settle and feel happier. Please do let us know if you are concerned that your student is suffering with homesickness. We are here to support both you and the student.

How to comfort a student in distress

There may be occasions where your student is upset. For example, the student may be homesick (see above), unwell or experiencing pressure in their academic studies. In such incidences please do not comfort the student physically. It is inappropriate to hug a student as you may comfort your own child, however there are many things you can do to help:

- Listen to the student's concerns
- Offer comforting words and advice
- If you can speak the students' first language, this may help to calm the student
- Please do alert us to the problem and we will offer you support

If you have any concerns about a student in your care, please contact Highbridge Education immediately.

Curfews and Bedtimes

If your student goes out, you should always know their plans, return times and exchange telephone numbers. Students who have permission to go out on their own will be required to return to homestays by the following times:

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| ■ 15 and under | Must be accompanied by an adult member of host family |
| ■ 16 & 17 | 10pm at the latest |
| ■ 18 and over | 11pm at the latest |

We will inform you whether the student you are hosting has permission to go out alone. All students who are permitted to go out unaccompanied by their homestay must take their mobile phone (fully charged) with them and keep this switched on. Please make sure that they have your telephone number programmed into their phone. It is important that if students do go out

unaccompanied, that they let you know where they are going and roughly how long they will be out. If for any reason they are delayed, students must contact you to keep you informed of their whereabouts.

Highbridge Education suggests that student bedtimes should be as follows:

- 12 and under 9pm
- 13 – 15 10pm
- 16 – 17 10:30pm
- 18 and over 11pm

Any deviation to these times should be discussed and agreed with the student.

Permission for students to visit the local area / travelling further afield

Students aged 16 and over are aware that they need to inform their hosts and Highbridge Education if they would like to go out by themselves or with friends to visit the local area. If they would like to travel further afield (e.g. to another city), Highbridge Education must be informed in advance, and we will seek permission from the student's parents.

If you would like to take a student out for an excursion (e.g. a day trip or cinema/theatre visit), please let us know. If this will incur any additional charges, this must be agreed in advance with Highbridge Education.

If a student informs you that they would like to go out and you have concerns about their safety or whether it is permitted, please contact us straight away and we will be happy to advise.

Students staying away from the homestay

Staying away overnight is forbidden unless specific permission has been given in advance by Highbridge Education, normally with the consent of the student's own parents.

Friends of students are not allowed to stay with you unless Highbridge Education has approved temporary guardianship in advance. This is for legal and insurance reasons.

Students are not allowed to smoke and students over the age of 18 may only drink alcohol with your express permission and under your supervision. If you have any concerns, please contact us immediately.

Accommodation requirements

Homestays should ensure that they provide a comfortable living environment for students. We require our students to be provided with the following:

- A suitable bedroom and social area(s) which are well kept, clean and in good repair, with sufficient natural light.
- Suitable safeguards must be in place to ensure that students have sufficient privacy from other students. Parents should be made aware of students who may wish to share bedrooms and must give consent before the arrangement goes ahead.
- Where homestays are using a double bed, only one student is using this facility. Under no circumstances should students share a double bed.
- The rooms should have suitable heating and lighting and there should be access to sufficient supplies of hot water as required.
- Students should have access to a private space to study.
- Students should have access to appropriate hanging and drawer space for clothing.
- Students should have access to a bathroom with a lock on the door and either a shower or bath.
- Students should be treated as part of the family, and therefore have access to the communal rooms in the home. They should not have access to family member's bedrooms.

Please make us aware if any member of the homestay is a smoker, or if you have any pets. Students should have the right to opt for a non-smoking and/or non-pet homestay environment.

Please be aware of the need to ascertain the adequacy of your home insurance in respect of hosting international students. The insured (homeowner) should declare all facts to the insurer in order to a) obtain the right cover and b) obtain the right premium.

No more than three students should be placed with the same homestay at any one time, unless in exceptional circumstances. Please ensure that you inform us if you work with other guardianship organisations as we need to check that you are not accommodating more than three students in total when members of an AEGIS guardianship organisation are being hosted.

When students under the age of 16 are in the care of a homestay, no students over the age of 20 should be hosted either by the guardianship organisation or another guardianship organisation working within the same homestay.

Homestays should not host any other paying guests or operate any form of bed and breakfast facility when hosting AEGIS students.

While there are no legal restrictions, homestays are expected to adhere to NSPCC advice on adult supervision and ensure that:

- Students aged 12 and under are not left home alone for a long period of time.
- Students aged 16 and under are not left home alone overnight.
- Students are not left home alone regardless of their age if they do not feel comfortable with this.

Meals and Snacks

We ask that homestays provide students with a full board provision of breakfast, lunch and dinner during their stay, taking account of any dietary needs. In addition, students should be provided with access to suitable drinks and snacks during their stay.

Breakfast - Typical food includes cereal, porridge, toast, croissants, fruit, or yoghurt. You may offer a cooked breakfast such as poached, boiled, or scrambled eggs, or bacon and eggs.

Lunch - this is usually a light meal, such as a salad, sandwich, or soup.

Dinner - this is usually the main meal of the day and will usually be a two-course meal. The main course will usually be hot. Dinner should be usually served around the table with the family members.

Snacks - you are asked to provide the student with snacks and drinks in-between meals. Typical snacks include a biscuit, slice of cake or fruit. Please explain to the student how they can access these.

We will provide you with information about any special dietary requirements or allergies. We ask students to let homestays know if they have any special requests.

Homestays are expected to prepare meals for the student (breakfast, lunch, and dinner). Students may want to help the family in their meal preparations or cook something themselves. Please do talk to your student about this and advise them how to use the kitchen and the necessary safety rules. If students have their own food that they wish to eat during their stay, we ask that they let you know so that this can be stored safely (for instance in a fridge if required).

Laundry

Homestays are asked to provide students with suitable laundry facilities if they are resident for more than one night. In most cases the homestay would undertake to do the laundry for the student. Depending upon the age of the students, the homestay may give permission for them to do their own laundry if requested and agreed.

Use of the homestay's car for transport

Any cars used to transport students should be roadworthy with up-to-date tax, insurance, and MOT (where required). If you provide transport using your car for the students in your care, please be aware of the need for adequate comprehensive vehicle insurance and that you should inform your insurers that you will be using your car to provide transport to international students for which you may be paid or receive expenses.

Please ensure that all relevant laws relating to the use of child seats or booster seats for under 12s, when the student is below 135cm in height, and seat belts for over 12s or more than 135cm tall are discussed with students and adhered to.

Access to computers and the internet & safe use of the internet

It is most likely that your student will want to access the internet during their stay. We ask that they use their own devices and not the family computer. We have an online safety policy that outlines the main risks to be aware of and what you can do as a homestay to help keep students safe. Please take time to read this document. <http://highuk.com/NewsDetail.aspx?ID=206>

Health and Safety in the Home

We expect all homestays to adhere to our health and safety guidelines:

- A minimum of one smoke alarm should be installed on every storey.
- A carbon monoxide alarm to be installed in any room containing a gas, liquid or solid fuel burning appliance.
- An annual landlord gas safety check to be undertaken by a Gas Safe registered engineer and a copy of the certificate provided to the guardianship organisation.

- The homestay must ensure that the electrical system is safe, e.g. sockets and light fittings are secure and not overloaded and any appliances used by the student are safe.
- The homestay must discuss the possible evacuation routes from the property with students on a regular basis. If doors or windows are locked students must know where to find the key in the event of a fire.
- If fire extinguishers and fire blankets are provided, they must be suitably serviced.
- Where open fires are used, a suitable fire guard should be in place when the fire is lit.
- Any matches / lighters should be appropriately stored.
- A basic first aid kit should be available to include, plasters, sterile eye-pad, triangular bandage, safety pins, non-medicated wound dressing, disposable gloves, leaflet giving guidance on first aid.
- Any prescription medication and drugs should be kept safely especially when hosting young students.
- Alcohol should be appropriately stored.
- The homestay should have an awareness of basic food hygiene when preparing meals for students.

We will conduct an initial visit to check that your accommodation is suitable prior to you hosting a student. Thereafter we will visit at least once a year to undertake an annual check. Please let us know immediately if there are any changes in the accommodation you are offering. This includes informing us of any temporary building work that may take place when you are due to host students.

Please refer to our separate Welfare, Health and Safety statement, that can be found at:

<http://highuk.com/NewsDetail.aspx?ID=206>

Medication

Occasionally students may have health conditions that require them to take medication. Medicines will usually be passed to the homestay from the school, with full details given. In such circumstances we will provide you with a care plan, which will provide necessary information, and an administration of medicines record sheet. Please record any medication administered and return the sheet to *[add who to return to]* at the end of the student's stay. Where a student's

condition requires homestays to have specific training, we will arrange this for you. If a student arrives with medication that you were not expecting, please contact **Michelle 0791743186** immediately.

Private Fostering

Where Highbridge Education has any day students under the age of 16 (under 18, if the student has a disability) living with homestays who are not their parent or a close relative for 28 days or more, they must adhere to the regulations regarding private fostering in place within their local area as directed by their local authority.

Highbridge Education is required to liaise with the school and the homestay to ensure that where possible the local authority is notified of the proposal for a private fostering arrangement at least six weeks before the date on which the arrangement is to begin. Where the arrangement is to begin within six weeks, the local authority is to be informed immediately.

Highbridge Education will liaise with the school and homestay to explain carefully what is required of them in entering into a private fostering arrangement. This includes explaining that there will be regular visits and meetings with the local authority.

Highbridge Education has a system in place for recording all correspondence with the local authority private fostering team and securing relevant permissions to share such information as is necessary with the student, parents, agents (where appropriate), homestay and partner school.

In the case of day students over the age of 16, we are mindful of the extended period students will spend with homestays and regularly carry out suitable checks to monitor and ensure their welfare.

Changes in circumstances

You are required to inform the guardianship organisation about any changes to the homestay arrangements.

Expenses and payments

Highbridge Education ensures that any payments due to homestays are transacted promptly and in line with any contractual agreements in place.



The rate of pay must be clarified at the time of booking. Normally we are able to confirm in advance, and in writing, the amount you will be paid for the student's stay. Highbridge Education will also pay your mileage if you collect the student from school. Any additional claims (e.g. expenses for day trips or buying something the student asks for) must be agreed with Highbridge Education in advance and included in your invoice.

Should there be a cancellation, we will do our best to find another student but, if not, and we are unable to provide you enough notice (7 days) we will pay for the booking, for up to 7 nights.

Highbridge Education will pay all the service payments on behalf of the student. The host family will under no circumstances discuss with the student, or the student's parents, friends or classmates, the lodging fees set with Highbridge Education without prior consultation with Highbridge Education. If a host family violates the rule, Highbridge Education reserves the right not to arrange further bookings with the host family.

Work completed before the end of month should be settled with an invoice provided before the last day of the month, which is when payments are made by Highbridge Education. If the invoice is not correct or not received, Highbridge Education will make the payment the following month given an invoice is received. For an invoice template, please kindly check the last page of this handbook.

Your contract and cancelling the agreement

Please note that due to the guardianship contractual arrangements between HIGHBRIDGE EDUCATION and you the host family, as well as our contract with the students and their parents, ALL ARRANGEMENTS must be made and confirmed through the Highbridge Education Head Office. It is essential that you contact us if any of our students contact you directly for two reasons - if we do not know about the arrangement, then we simply cannot pay you.

Responsibilities during a pandemic

Pandemics can cause major disruption to travel and schooling. It is important in such events that *Highbridge Education* takes advice from the government, the UK Health Security Agency and the World Health Organisation. AEGIS also provides guidance for members to follow. This is regularly updated as a situation develops. Usually, in a pandemic it is important to restrict movement so as not to spread the disease further. That means boarding school students would usually remain

at school. In the event of a pandemic *Highbridge Education* may not be able to offer homestay accommodation as this could place students, homestay families and the wider community at risk. Highbridge Education will work with parents to find flights to home countries where required. Highbridge Education will work with schools to meet students' needs during a pandemic. This could be by helping to support students to learn remotely as directed by the school. Highbridge Education will work with parents and schools to find suitable quarantine accommodation for students where required. Highbridge Education has a policy that outlines the procedures we will follow during a pandemic. This can be found here: <http://highuk.com/NewsDetail.aspx?ID=206>

HOSTING TIPS

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 or theatre visit
- Visit to town centre, supermarket or local shopping centre – many students love shopping!
- Physical Exercise: swimming, tennis, football, basketball, bicycle ride
- Arts and crafts: - painting, drawing, music - many students play a musical instrument, knitting, making Christmas decorations or cards, sewing napkins
- 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
- 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.

And finally...

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