

St. Martha's
S E N I O R S C H O O L



Helpful Hints
for
Homestay Students

WELCOME

The following pages will in Part 1 go through, quite thoroughly, all the information you should be aware of when coming to live in host family accommodation. Part 2 contains very important information concerning your visa and other formalities.

This may be your first visit to the UK and possibly even the first time away from home, so we will do our best to help you settle into your new surroundings and to make your stay here a happy and successful one.

Take some time to read carefully through these notes. Do not worry if you do not understand everything, we will answer any queries you have when you arrive.

PART 1 – Living with a family

Host Family Accommodation

Overseas students attending St Martha's live in family accommodation. The family (your host family) will welcome you into their home and the mother (your hostess) will look after you for the duration of your stay. It is very likely that the family will have a daughter at St Martha's school or one who has recently left the school and is studying at university.

Living With a New Family

At first you may find your new surroundings a little strange. If there is something you do not understand in your host family, just ask your hostess. In any new country there will be different customs and habits to adjust to and be aware of, and we are all here to help you.

You will be living in someone else's home and, therefore, cannot expect absolute freedom in matters of meal times, the hours you keep, or entertaining friends. If you can fit in with the family's ways your stay will be happier. We therefore suggest:

On Arrival

On arrival at your host family please ask your hostess if you can contact your parents/guardian by telephone to confirm your safe arrival in your host family accommodation. Also please give two or three emergency telephone numbers to your host family, in case your parents or guardian need to be contacted urgently. Your host family will have received a copy of your St Martha's Student Accommodation Parental Consent Form. If your hostess does not have a copy, please inform the Welfare Office.

Mobile phones are also very useful, especially should we need to contact you, so if you have a mobile phone, please pass this number to your hostess, your parent/guardian and the school as soon as possible.

Smoking

Most host family accommodation is non-smoking. If you are permitted to smoke, ask if smoking should be restricted to certain rooms. Never smoke in your bedroom unless your host family has given you permission to do so and provided an ashtray.

Food

Food in the UK may be very different from what you have been used to eating at home. Try everything! You will find new foods that you like. If you have any particular dietary requirements, your hostess will have been informed in advance and will do her best to meet any reasonable requests. Otherwise, speak with your hostess and let her know what you like or do not like to eat.

Find out what time meals are served and be punctual for them. If you plan to be late for any meal or miss a meal altogether, let your hostess know well in advance.

Friends' Visits

It is understandable that you will wish to visit your friends and vice-versa. However, it is discourteous to bring friends home to visit you without the prior permission of your hostess.

Your Bedroom

Please keep your room tidy. Ask your hostess if she would like you to make your own bed. Bed linen should be changed once a week. Make yourself comfortable in your room, unpack your belongings into the cupboards and drawers and there will be shelves upon which to put your books. Ask your hostess where she would like you to store your suitcases. Do not plug electrical items into sockets without checking with your hostess.

Please also do not put things such as pictures or posters on the walls without asking your hostess first, as pins and sellotape can damage the wallpaper. A few student bedrooms will have ensuite facilities, but the majority of students will just be sharing the family bathroom. Ask what time it is convenient to have your daily bath/shower and always clean the bathroom after using it.

Heating and Lighting

The weather here will probably be very different to your home country. It will become colder during the autumn as we approach winter and we will give you plenty of advice on how to keep warm.

You do not need to bring many jumpers just bring a few and you will find that using several thinner layers will keep you warmer. You can buy warm clothes fairly cheaply in the large shopping complexes in Barnet Town Centre.

Electricity and gas are expensive commodities, so help your host family reduce fuel costs by switching off lights and heaters in rooms that are not in use.

Most homes have central heating, which will be activated by a time switch. The heating will probably come on for a few hours in the morning to heat the house

when the family is getting up and then again for several hours during the evening. It is unhealthy and expensive to heat your room through the night.

Telephones

We ask all our students not to use the host family telephone. If you are allowed to use their telephone, please do not abuse this privilege. Any incoming calls should be restricted to your immediate family only. Always ask to use the phone first and whenever possible reverse the charges for long-distance or overseas calls. Alternatively you can phone overseas via an International Operator on an ADC basis, (Advice Duration and Charge) and pay for calls at the time.

Many families now have broadband and your host will provide you with details of how to share in this. This will then allow you the opportunity to contact friends and family through free providers such as MSN and Skype. *It is very important that you do not overuse the internet as this can damage the purpose of living with a family.*

Your language and social skills must develop during your time with a host family. We will monitor this closely through our contact with your hostess.

Students are all provided with a free email account that will be set up for them when they arrive at school.

Damage

If you damage anything in the house, please let your hostess know immediately and she will inform the Welfare Officer. You have to pay for any damage you cause.

If, when you arrive at your lodgings you notice anything broken or damaged in your room or bathroom, please tell your hostess and the Welfare Officer. This will prevent any misunderstandings happening later on.

Accommodation and Facilities

All students have their own bedroom. The rooms contain:-

a bed	mirror
a wardrobe	easy chair (if possible)
table	study chair
desk lamp	shelves/cabinet for books
adequate heating	

Some rooms have their own bath or shower. Personal laundry will be done for you – ask your hostess when and where she would like your washing to be left.

Accommodation is on a half-board basis, which means a good or cooked breakfast, evening meal on weekdays and full board at weekends. All your

laundry will be done for you at least once a week and your rent includes a daily bath/shower.

Students are not permitted to remain in their accommodation for the summer break and must return to live with their parent/guardian. Each girl is asked to complete a holiday plan on arrival at St Martha's.

Extra expenses may be incurred for the following. The Welfare Officer must be fully consulted:

- a) Extra heating in very cold weather
- b) Baths or showers if used more than once per day
- c) Meals your hostess agrees to provide for your guests
- d) Any special requirements

Payments

Payments: is made for accommodation in advance to the school who will pay your host family on a weekly basis. Any amendments as described in the following paragraph will be calculated at the end of term.

Refunds: of up to 2/3rds of the weekly fee may be agreed with your hostess if you are away from the host accommodation during term time for 7 consecutive days, but not for shorter periods. Your hostess must be informed in advance for this to apply (except in the case of illness). You are booked on a 7night basis and you are normally expected to remain at your lodgings during the weekends. No refunds are applicable for weekends spent away. If, however, you wish to change your booking arrangements this must be done through the Welfare Office.

Retaining Fee: If you return home during the Christmas and Easter holidays, you should pay 1/3 of your normal rate calculated on a daily basis for each day spent away in order to retain your accommodation. No retaining fee may be charged during the summer vacation. If you move temporarily into a new home because your family is going away, your hostess will pay the new family if she has already been paid for that month. You may be able to leave your luggage with your hostess by prior arrangement over the summer holidays at no cost; alternatively the school can arrange storage with local companies (at a special reduced rate for our students).

Giving Notice

If your hostess wishes you to leave she will get in touch with the Welfare Office, who will find alternative accommodation for you. If you wish to leave the lodgings you must inform the Welfare Office of your reasons. If they agree, two weeks' notice or two weeks' rent in lieu should be given to the hostess.

Students may not make their own arrangements regarding any accommodation without consulting with the school.

Keeping Sensible Hours

You will have an intensive programme of study and you are therefore, expected to keep reasonable hours and to limit the number of times you go out in the evenings. You are expected to attend all your lessons and arrive in good time for them. If you go out for the evening you should be in by 10.30pm (11 – 11.30 pm at weekends). When returning late at night, do not disturb others in the household who may be asleep. You are not allowed to spend nights away from your lodgings during the week. At weekends you may only go to places approved by your parents. You must leave the telephone number and address of where you will be staying on these occasions with your hostess, before you go and inform her of the time and date of your return. These visits should be limited to one or two a term. If you change your plans when you are away you must telephone your host family and let them know what is happening. They will obviously be very concerned if you do not arrive home when you are expected. You may not spend any time away from your lodgings without written prior consent from your parents (*see Parental Consent Form for details*).

Leisure Activities

Although you are expected to study hard it is sensible to spend some time in recreational pursuits.

If you have special interests, let your hostess, personal tutor or a member of the student council know at the beginning of the term. You will be informed of the activities on offer at the school. Your personal tutor will introduce you to others with similar interests to yours.

Council Tax

Students staying in school accommodation do not have to pay this tax. If you have any queries regarding payment, please contact the Welfare Officer.

Taking Care of Your Belongings

Please take care of your possessions and be respectful with belongings of others including those in your host family. Never borrow or take anything that does not belong to you. If you are unsure how to use something i.e. shower, telephone, television etc. Please ask your hostess to show you, so that you do not accidentally damage anything.

In school you will be given a locker to place your personal belongings. We ask you not to bring valuable items to school in case you lose them. Our Student Guide gives full details of our school routines, rules and guidelines.

In your bedroom make sure you put your passport and other valuable documents or possessions somewhere sensible or ask your hostess to take care of these items for you.

Do not leave large amounts of cash in your bedroom. Always pay cash into your bank account. The school can help you to open a bank account when you arrive.

No one apart from you is responsible for your belongings. As many students have computers, laptops, mobile phones and other valuable equipment, we strongly advise that you take out your own insurance policy to protect your belongings.

The National Union of Students has very reasonable insurance policies made especially for students. Application forms can be obtained from the Welfare Office.

Health And Medical Care

It is very important to take care of yourself, as the climate in the UK, our food and your new daily routine may all be different to what you are used to at home. Keeping healthy will help you adjust to your new surrounds and the following notes give additional advice about keeping healthy as well as how to obtain medical treatment.

Try to eat a balanced diet. Your hostess will try to provide varied and healthy meals. (At weekends your hostess may offer you a sandwich style lunch or late breakfast and lunch together called “brunch”. Both these are typical meals to have at lunchtime).

Eating the right foods will help you to keep warm and healthy and remember that a balanced diet should contain something from each of the main food groups i.e. proteins, fat, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals.

Make sensible life-style choices. You will be on an intensive course of study so try to establish regular study habits. Don't have too many late nights; sleep is vital for concentration and general well being. It is also important to have a good balance between study and relaxation. Try to take some regular exercise, join the gym or walk to school occasionally! You will find you have more energy if you keep fit and healthy.

Hospital, General Practitioner Gp (Doctor) & Other Services

In the UK we have a health care service, which provides treatment for UK residents, and it is called the National Health Service or NHS for short.

As your course is longer than 6 months in duration you will be eligible for free NHS treatment from your arrival in the UK. This means that you can receive emergency treatment and consult a doctor at no charge. In order to obtain this treatment, **YOU MUST REGISTER WITH A LOCAL DOCTOR**, usually the same doctor that your host family is registered with. A list of local doctors is available from the Welfare Office or www.nhs.uk.

PLEASE DO THIS IN THE FIRST FEW DAYS AFTER YOUR ARRIVAL and do not wait until you are ill.

Once you are registered you will receive a medical card which confirms your eligibility for NHS treatment. Some GP clinics see every new patient for a routine medical and you should ask if your vaccinations are up to date. If you have a translated copy of your immunisation history this may help.

If you prefer to be treated as a private patient, which may avoid having to wait for treatment, you may ask a doctor if he can take you on this basis if you are prepared to pay for it.

If your NHS doctor wants you to have a course of treatment, he will give you a prescription to take to the local dispensing chemist. If you are 18 and under, and in full time education, you will not pay for your medicines. Otherwise the current charge is £7.20 per item.

Even if you are entitled to free NHS treatment you may still wish to consider taking out some medical insurance to cover any unforeseen costs that may arise should you become ill or have an accident in the UK.

You can visit the Department of Health website: www.dh.gov.uk for more information.

If you are too ill to attend the school, inform your hostess immediately and she will telephone the school first thing in the morning (0208 449 6889 by 9.00 am) to report your absence.

If you need to see a doctor your hostess may be able to make an appointment for you or you can telephone the GP surgery yourself if necessary. You are usually able to see a doctor on the same day if you need treating as an emergency patient. If you cannot obtain an appointment you may prefer to visit the NHS/Drop In Clinic at Finchley Memorial Hospital, Granville Road, London N12 0JE tel: 0208 349 7471.

If you just wish to have some general health care advice you can telephone NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

If you are away for school for four days or more you must bring a medical certificate when you return.

It is very important that the correct reason for any absence is recorded. Frequent absences are reported to parents, referred to in reports and the Home Office require your attendance records to extend visas.

Please note that if you have been unfortunate to come into contact with any contagious disease such as chicken pox, you will not be allowed to return to school without a letter from your doctor confirming you are no longer infectious.

Dental Treatment

Full-time students aged 18 and under are entitled to free NHS dental treatment.

Students aged 19 and over will pay 80% of the costs of their treatment. (The NHS pay the remaining 20%). If you need to see a dentist please ask the Welfare Office to make the first appointment on your behalf.

You may also consult a private dentist if you so wish. By seeing a private dentist you will pay the full cost of your treatment.

Opticians

Full-time students aged 18 and under can have free sight tests at retail opticians. If glasses are needed an NHS voucher will be given and frames can either be chosen free of charge from a limited range or the NHS voucher can be used to contribute towards the purchase of private frames. Students aged 19 and over are not entitled to free sight tests, glasses or frames.

PART 2 – Visa and other formalities

During the past few years, major reorganisation within the Home Office has caused delays in dealing with visa extensions. The latest guidelines from the Home Office can be obtained from their very informative website: www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk. The Welfare Officer always has these guidelines available and will be happy to help with general information on visas.

It is essential that you check the stamp that has been placed in your passport on arrival in the UK by the immigration authorities and keep a note of when your student visa will expire.

All applications to stay in the UK **MUST** be made before your current leave runs out and the Welfare Officer can provide an application form and information to you. You should see the Welfare Officer with your passport about 2 months before your leave runs out. Please remember that your attendance record is required by the Home Office to extend your visa, so please ensure you attend all your lessons so that our report is favourable.

If you wish to find out more about visas and immigration, in addition to the Home Office website you can access the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on www.fco.gov.uk or the new UK visas site at www.ukvisas.gov.uk which contains very easy to use pre-arrival in the UK information and guidance.

For more specific information on your UK visa you can telephone UKCOSA on +44(0) 20 7101 9922 from overseas or 0207 107 9922 from the UK, as they offer a free advice line for students:
Monday – Friday 1.00 pm – 4.00 pm or email enquiries on enquiries@ukcosa.org.uk.

*If you wish to telephone the Home Office please ring: 020 7035 4848 or fax: 020 7035 4745
email: public.enquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk*

Re-entry letters: If you are going home for a holiday during your course, the school office will supply you with a letter stating that you are a full-time student and need to return by a certain date, in order to help your travel arrangements and re-entry to UK.

Registration with the Police

If your passport states that you are required to register with the police and you live in Barnet or elsewhere in the Metropolitan Police District, you must report, usually within 7 days of your arrival in the UK, with your passport, travel documents, any Home Office or Overseas Visitors Records Office letters you may have and work permit if applicable to the:

Overseas Visitors Records Office
Ground Floor
Brandon House
180 Borough High Street
Borough, London
SE1 1LH
Tel: 0207 230 1208

The cost of this is currently £34.00 per person and you can pay by cheque, cash, credit card, switch, delta (not electron) or sterling traveller's cheques. The office is open from 9.00am – 4.00pm Monday to Friday, except Bank Holidays.

It is advisable to arrive as early as possible in the morning to avoid long delays. The office may close in exceptional circumstances without notice.

The nearest underground station to school is High Barnet station (Northern Line) and the nearest British Rail station is Hadley Wood station, both lines will take you directly into the centre of London.

Once you have your Overseas Visitors Record Certificate, you must keep it up to date. The current regulations will be printed on the certificate and you should read them thoroughly and familiarise yourself with these instructions.

Changes in your circumstances such as a new address or school may be reported to your local police station telephone no: 0208 733 5032 or mobile no: 07887 633 343. Email address: HighBarnet.SNT@met.police.uk

Changes to your visa must be reported to the Overseas Visitors Records Office in London.

If you have any queries please ask at the Welfare Office. Maps and further directions are also available from the office.

The school keeps a copy of your passport and police registration certificate, if applicable, in case you lose any of these important documents.

Employment

Not all students are able to work in the UK. This restriction will be noted in your passport.

New regulations regarding overseas students working in the UK came into force on June 18 1999.

If you are allowed to work in the UK, you are normally permitted to work full time in holiday periods and no more than 20 hours per week during the academic term.

The penalties for working in excess of your permitted hours are severe and can result in immediate deportation with no right of appeal.

There are other important restrictions on working the UK, so if you are considering working in the UK, please see the Welfare Officer with your passport and police registration certificate if you have one.

CONFIDENTIAL

Slip to be returned to the Welfare Office not later than 2 weeks after you have moved into your lodgings:

Student's Name:

.....

Have you any medical condition of which the school should be aware?

YES

NO

If YES please give

details:.....

.....

.....

The doctor I have registered with is

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

I have read and accept the terms and conditions set out in the notes provided to me by the school in respect of living with a family, visa and other formalities:

Signature of

Student:.....

Date:.....

Holiday Plans

Please state where and with whom you will be staying during the following school holidays.

MICHAELMAS (September to December)

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LENT (June to April)

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TRINITY (May to July)

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If you are undecided about any plans just write what you are considering doing and confirm as soon as possible.

My mobile telephone is:.....