



Beaconhills
College

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM

HOMESTAY INFORMATION

A SHINING LIGHT IN EDUCATION

PREFACE

This *Homestay Information* document is provided to homestay host families and parents of students participating in the homestay program. It is designed to inform all parties of the guidelines, policies and processes, managed with the College's International Student program.

WHAT IS HOMESTAY?

Homestay is a term used to describe full board accommodation offered by a family, a couple or a single person for which a set weekly fee is charged. This fee covers all expenses associated with providing food and shelter to an international student. This includes providing:

- a single room for the student's use
- three meals a day, seven days a week
- facilities – a bed, wardrobe, towels and linen
- utilities – gas, electricity, heating and water costs
- cleaning services of common living areas
- use of living areas within residence
- study facilities – desk, study light, bookcase.

The homestay experience is an excellent way for students to improve their English, learn more about Australian culture and to make the most of their international education experience. It is essential that homestay accommodation is of high quality and provides a safe, comfortable and caring environment.

No more than three international students can be placed in a homestay arrangement.

Homestay host parents must reside at the same address as students.

LIVING WITH AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

Host families are encouraged to help with the student's cultural adjustment and support their community and social integration. Australian families with children attending the College provide an opportunity for the student to develop social relationships which strengthen their cultural experience.

International students studying in the College are teenagers, and arriving in a strange country can be a new and daunting experience for them. They will have to adjust to a different lifestyle, food, culture and language and many will also have very high expectations for academic achievement.

Students may initially feel homesick or lonely and may show a lack of enthusiasm at times. Tiredness and minor illness is often an initial reaction. To overcome these feelings of cultural dislocation, we ask that homestay hosts are supportive and understanding during this period.

PLACEMENT OF A STUDENT IN HOMESTAY ACCOMMODATION

An international student will be carefully matched to a compatible homestay family. Suitability will be determined according to the information provided on the *International Student Enrolment Application* and *Homestay Host Profile and Registration* forms.

It is College policy that to be eligible for homestay arrangements, the international student must be at least 13 years of age at the time of starting the homestay accommodation.

The international department at Beaconhills College will contact host families as soon as the student's arrival details are finalised. The student will be collected from the airport and brought to the home by a College-approved transport arrangement.

WELFARE RESPONSIBILITIES

The international department manages day-to-day support services such as:

- information and advice to students, parents and homestay providers
- homestay accommodation placement and management
- supervision of student reporting and monitoring as required by DEECD
- provision of student reports and feedback to parents
- critical incident and management
- attendance/academic performance issues.

The international department is also responsible for overseeing all accommodation, support and general welfare arrangements for international students at Beaconhills College. This includes:

- periodic (at least twice yearly) review of accommodation, support and welfare arrangements for all international students
- liaison with Executive Principal/Head of Campus regarding complex or significant international student management matters
- giving interim consent to medical treatment in emergencies
- dispute resolution where issues relate to homestay.

Where the College acts or intends to act to remove or withdraw a student from the homestay program, the College shall be entitled to take such steps as it deems necessary to protect its rights and act in accordance with its responsibilities under the National Code.

If an international student turns 18 while enrolled at the College, the College's Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW) responsibility will cease.

Additionally, the requirements under Standard 5 of the National Code and this policy will no longer apply.

The *International Program Homestay Responsibility Agreement*, however remains in place until the student completes their studies at the College or provides the required notice period of 4 weeks to change accommodation.

Note: Homestay providers are not responsible for the student's overall welfare. Any welfare issues concerning the student should be immediately raised with a member of the College's international team.

HOMESTAY BRIEFING

Homestay parents, along with the College, are required to exercise a duty of care towards international students. It is the College policy that homestay families are provided with a briefing program before the overseas student arrives at their home. This induction awareness program will outline the following:

- the College's Child Safe Standards and relevant policies as they apply in a homestay environment
- a knowledge and understanding of the needs of adolescents
- an understanding of cultural, linguistic and religious differences
- an understanding of the needs of young people away from their home environment
- a flexible approach to matters of discipline, house rules and co-operative living
- what to do if a problem occurs.

CHILD SAFE PRACTICES

The College is committed to the protection of all children in its care in order to manage the risks surrounding child protection, and has developed Child Safe Standards, including our *Child Safe Code of Conduct*, which outlines appropriate standards of behaviour for all adults towards students. The Code serves to protect students, reduce any opportunities for abuse or harm to occur, and promote child safety in the College community. It provides guidance on how to best support students and how to avoid or better manage difficult situations.

Beaconhills College has the defined expectations of behaviours and boundaries for all adults interacting with students within our College community. This includes all teaching staff, non-teaching staff, Board, volunteers, third party contractors, homestay providers, external education providers and parents/carers.

The College's Board of Directors has endorsed this *Child Safe Code of Conduct* available [here](#).

Potential host families must obtain a valid Working with Children (WWC) Check clearance for every person aged 18 years and over residing in the home. If any household members refuse a WWC Check, then the application to host will be refused. This is consistent with standard 5.3.2 of the National Code.

In order for a family to host a Beaconhills College international student in a homestay, all host family members over the age of 18 need to:

- obtain a current Working with Children (WWC) Check online [here](#) and make sure to select the following within your application process:
 - Under 'Do you need an Employee or Volunteer Check?' select: 'Volunteer'
 - Beaconhills College as the organisation for whom you volunteer
 - Under Occupational Fields under the Working with Children (WWC) Check select code 78: Student exchange / homestay arrangements (Student exchange / homestay arrangement under Part 4.5A of the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, including accommodation in a person's home)

It is an ongoing obligation for host families to comply with regulations set out on the Child Safe policies located on the College website [here](#)

Further information on the WWC Check can be found [here](#) or from the WWC Check information line 1300 652 879.

COST AND PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The College will collect and manage homestay bonds and will implement an appropriate homestay payment arrangement.

Payment of homestay fees to the host family will be made by the third week of each month.

Note: Every effort should be made to ensure that homestay accommodation payment methods avoid the student being involved in the transaction.

In particular, homestay providers with concerns about payments must not involve the student directly in any discussion or dispute - any matters concerning homestay payments are to be resolved between the international department, the student's parents and the homestay host.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM HOMESTAY RESPONSIBILITY AGREEMENT

The *International Program Homestay Responsibility Agreement* will be signed by the homestay host, the College and the student before the student's arrival. Students signing the *International Program Homestay Responsibility Agreement* are to acknowledge they are aware of its content.

The *International Program Homestay Responsibility Agreement* details:

1. The weekly/fortnightly cost of homestay, bond amount, payment arrangements and holiday/return arrangements.
 2. The obligations and expectations of the homestay host, the College, the parent and the student. It ensures the homestay family has in place appropriate insurance coverage (home and contents), which recognises that the international student is residing within the premises.
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ON ARRIVAL

Upon the student's arrival, a signed copy of the *International Program Homestay Responsibility Agreement* will be provided to the homestay family and parents. The signed agreement clearly specifies the cost, bond, payment, living arrangements and expected standard of behaviour between the parties. Beaconhills College will keep the original agreement and provide copies to the student and homestay family and parents.

On arrival, the following will need to be clearly explained to the student as outlined in the *International Program Homestay Responsibility Agreement* for international students:

- house rules
- use of household facilities, such as the washing machine and water use etc
- making and receiving international calls from home and internet access.

Note:

1. Telephone expenses are the responsibility of the international student as agreed in the *International Homestay Responsibility Agreement*.
2. Students will need to be provided with a house key.

Homestay families should also be aware of the following:

- Some international students will not be used to doing household chores as they may have had servants in their home.
- Students may not be used to eating a western diet and homestay parents should be aware of any food a student cannot eat due to religious beliefs. Some students are also accustomed to eating a small snack when they come home from school.
- Privacy is important and personal possessions and personal space of students should be respected.

Host families may initially have to explain directions to the school as well as explain procedures for buying public transport tickets and the location of train, tram and bus stops and timetables. Students will be given the Student Safety Card with all relevant contact details upon arrival at the College.

Note: Your point of contact regarding any issues or concerns is a member of the College's international team:

- Emergency mobile: 0439 748 697
- Vanessa Therese, International Student Co-ordinator:
vanessa.therese@beaconhills.vic.edu.au

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students will be made aware of their responsibilities which include:

- keeping their bedroom and study area tidy
- keeping other areas of the house tidy after use, including the kitchen, bathroom and toilet
- keeping their valuables and personal possessions safe and not to leave them lying around the house
- placing valuables in a safety deposit box or with the homestay family for safekeeping
- respecting the property of homestay hosts.

STUDENT-RELATED ISSUES

STUDENT ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

Homestay parents need to actively monitor student attendance and may be required to write a note of explanation if a student is absent from school for any reason. Homestay parents must contact section administration to report absence for the student at:
PakenhamAbsences@beaconhills.vic.edu.au

Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) visa regulations allow non-attendance for 20 per cent of contact hours to cover occasional absences and illnesses, including illness supported by a medical certificate. International students not attending school at least 80 per cent of the time (over a term) are in breach of their visa conditions and may face visa cancellation. If you have any concerns over the student's attendance in school, please bring them to the attention of the Head of International Teaching and Learning.

ILLNESS

All students are to maintain Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) during their stay in Australia - this is arranged by the College. All overseas students will receive their Overseas Health Card and number when they arrive at the College. Students may initially need help with making medical and dental appointments. If a student is ill and is not able to attend school the host parent will be required to notify the College via the normal communication methods.

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

Students are expected to return home during the mid-year and end of year semester breaks. Accommodation charges cover the term breaks in April and September. The following *School Travel Policy* applies.

SCHOOL TRAVEL POLICY

This policy applies to students who have been issued a Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW) letter. The Policy does not apply to students residing with a parent or a Department of Immigration and Citizenship approved relative. Any trip taken within Victoria or interstate must be done so with the written approval of the student's parent and be endorsed by the College. In the case where a student is living in a homestay, the homestay provider should be advised of the arrangements and be provided with details of the student's travel plan.

Students will be able to travel, subject to the above approvals, in the following circumstances:

1. The student is travelling with his or her homestay family on a holiday.
2. The student is travelling on a College camp or excursion supervised by College staff.
3. The student is travelling with a person(s) approved by the student's school and that person holds a Working with Children (WWC) Check.
4. The student is travelling on a commercial interstate package tour which is provided by a registered company, is specifically designed for students and includes appropriate supervision or chaperone arrangement. It should also involve no independent travel, i.e. pick up and drop off is at the homestay, the College or an assembly point designated by the College.
5. The student is travelling in the company of a direct family member over 18 years of age (parent, sibling, aunt/uncle, etc) who will accept responsibility for the student during the travel.
6. The student is travelling to a sporting or club event as part of a local team or group and will be under the care and supervision of the club or association during the trip. In these circumstances, it is expected that students will be supervised at all times by adults who hold the required Working with Children (WWC) Check.

Suitable arrangements regarding the student's holiday plans should be made before the student's departure. Dates of departure and return are at the discretion of Beacons Hills College who will take into consideration the attendance requirements mandated under the student's visa conditions (i.e. the student must be able to maintain attendance of 80 per cent or more).

GOING OUT/PERSONAL OUTINGS

Students will need to ask permission from their homestay family if they wish to go out. For safety reasons students should tell their host family where they are going, with whom, and the expected time of return. If students think that they will be home later than the agreed time, they must ring the homestay host.

Sometimes students may have after-school activities and may be home later than expected. Students must notify hosts if they will be home late or if they will not be home for dinner. It is reasonable to expect that they should be home at a specified time and hosts will need to establish appropriate times for them to arrive home on week nights and weekends.

Students should be reminded of the following, for their own safety:

- It is advisable not to carry too much cash.
- It is best to travel in a group whenever possible.
- Avoid catching public transport late at night.
- Read public transport timetables carefully so as not to miss the last train or tram home.
- Avoid risky areas in Melbourne at night.

VISITORS

Students should ask permission from their homestay family before inviting friends to visit them. Some homestay families may agree to provide meals for friends when given appropriate notice.

OVERNIGHT STAY ARRANGEMENTS

Students must have parental permission to stay overnight away from their designated homestay provider, and must provide the College with the name and contact phone number of the person they are staying with. The College will ensure that all adults in the home hold the required Working with Children (WWC) Check and will undertake a site check of the home.

Note: Homestay host families must notify the international department if overnight stay arrangements are not observed or if overnight stays become frequent or are of concern.

If a student in homestay accommodation leaves without notice or begins staying overnight away from their designated homestay without permission, the homestay provider must report the matter immediately to the international department as this is a breach of the student's visa conditions. A breach of this visa condition is a very serious matter and could result in a student's visa cancellation.

MONITORING HOMESTAY

Beaconhills College and host families will develop and maintain effective and regular communication during each school term, regarding student behaviour, wellbeing and homestay placement issues or concerns'.

Verifying the suitability of homestay accommodation includes a site visit before the students arrival.

Once the student arrives periodic inspections occur at minimum once every 6 months, or more frequently if deemed necessary by the College.

GIVING NOTICE

Once a homestay family has been allocated by the College, this family will be reserved for a student. It is therefore expected that the student remain in that accommodation for a reasonable period of time (minimum of three months) before giving notice, unless exceptional circumstances occur.

If an international student and their parents are not happy with the homestay accommodation that has been arranged, parents can request and provide notice to the College that a more suitable home be found. Four weeks' notice must be provided if the student wishes to leave the host family. A student who moves without giving notice will forfeit the bond.

Alternatively, if a homestay provider wishes to terminate the homestay agreement, the student and the College must be given at least two weeks' notice and the College's approval should be sought before proceeding with the termination.

If the College deems homestay arrangements are not appropriate for the student and places the student in distress or at risk of any kind, the College can terminate the homestay arrangement without any notice. No notice period payment, nor bond forfeit is applied in these circumstances.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Beaconhills College is committed to having mechanisms to deal with complaints impartially, promptly and confidentially. The formal investigation of a complaint will require that details of the complaint be lodged in writing addressed to the Head of International Programs. The handling of the complaint will start within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint. There is no cost associated with lodging a complaint with Beaconhills College. A student may be helped or accompanied by a support person at any stage of this process.

The identity of the complainant will be protected unless permission for disclosure is given. Beaconhills College will maintain a student's enrolment and accommodation/welfare arrangement while the internal complaints process is ongoing unless extenuating circumstances relating to the welfare of the student apply. This does not necessarily mean that a student must remain in class.

Complainants will be provided with a written statement of the outcome, including details and reasons for the decision. Complainants have the right of appeal and will be advised of further avenues of review. Beaconhills has arrangements in place for an independent external body to hear the complaints or appeal if the internal complaints process has been completed and the student remains dissatisfied. If the outcome of a complaint, either external or internal, is favourable to the student, Beaconhills will immediately advise the student of this and implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required. Beaconhills College will keep accurate records of the entire complaint and/or appeal process.

This agreement, and the availability of complaints and appeals processes, does not remove the right of the student to take action under Australia's consumer protection laws.

Homestay hosts may refer to the College [Complaints Resolution Policy](#) on our College website.

BEACONHILLS COLLEGE

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