



GUIDELINES

hosting your student

Introduction

St. Clare's, Oxford has been providing courses for teenagers and adults for more than 60 years. Most of our students live in residential accommodation provided by the college. However, some choose to stay in a private home – it is an opportunity to meet native speakers informally and to learn more about British life and culture from the inside.

As a 'homestay provider', we know you will do your best to help your students to feel comfortable in your home. We also know the importance of your role in the success of the programme as a whole. Students have fond memories of their hosts and often maintain contact long after their stay.

We know too that misunderstandings occur from time to time and the following Guidelines offer some helpful tips. On the whole, it is best to discuss little problems openly as they occur – but with great sensitivity.

Please remember that the team at St. Clare's is always ready to help resolve difficulties before they become serious.

Living in the home

Students should be welcomed into your home and encouraged, as far as possible, to join in the routines of home life. Flexibility is required on both sides: the student should make every effort to adapt to a different culture; and the homestay provider should be ready to adapt to a newcomer in their home.

Please make sure that there is no other person of the same native language in your house since this is usually an important condition of booking. You should not accommodate more than two students from abroad in your home at the same time without informing St. Clare's.

Single room

Students expect a single room where they can study or spend time alone. Each room should be clean and tidy, contain a full-size, comfortable bed with sheets, pillow-cases and towels provided. There should be ample drawer and wardrobe space, a mirror, writing table or desk and lamp.

Heating is often an issue in winter. Adequate heating for study should be provided in the student's room during the evenings. However, many students find British houses draughty and cold especially at night. Please be sensitive to their request and discuss the alternatives (thicker duvet, extra blankets, hot water bottle) with them directly.

Using the bathroom

Students will normally use the shared bathroom and toilet facilities. It is often a good idea to demonstrate the use of these facilities and give guidance about the timing and length of showers/baths. Cultural differences may make it difficult to discuss flushing mechanisms, shower fittings and screens, disposal of toilet paper and sanitary towels etc.

Meals

Food is an important part of the homestay experience and students should eat the same food as you. However, some may have special dietary requirements (on grounds of health or religion) – we may be able to let you know in advance but it is a good idea to discuss preferences with the student on arrival.

Breakfast is hurried in most households and may be taken separately but you should encourage your student to sit together over the evening meal – it is a good opportunity to find out more about each other. Please be ready to adjust meal-times since many students are used to eating later in the evening than is usual here and some may be engaged in college-based activities in the latter part of the afternoon. Students should always let you know if they intend to miss a meal on occasion.

British food has become far more international over recent years and is generally appreciated by students. Menus should certainly be varied and please ensure salad and/or vegetables are available with the evening meal, with fruit available for dessert. 'Convenience food' (baked beans, sausages, pasties etc.) should be kept to a minimum.

Cleaning and laundry

Students should be encouraged to tidy their room so that you can clean it properly at least once a week. Bed linen and towels should be provided and also laundered at least once a week.

Personal laundry is more problematic. Generally you should actively offer to wash one or two loads of the student's clothes each week. However, some students may ask for a daily wash while others attempt to hand-wash their own clothes. We consider that both of these requests are unreasonable. Please discuss options which suit your household or suggest alternatives outside. Students also appreciate the use of an iron from time to time.

Sharing the house

Students should have access to all shared areas of the house. They should be issued with a key to the front door and allowed to come and go freely. Please instruct them into the security features of your house: burglar alarm, safety catches on windows, dead-locks on doors.

Television is a useful aid for language learners and can help to build a stronger relationship with you. Access to the television should be available either in the living room/kitchen or in the student's own bedroom.

Students at St. Clare's are strongly discouraged from smoking on college premises or in the neighbourhood of the college. Likewise smoking must be prohibited in your home – it is a potential fire hazard. It remains at your discretion whether you permit smoking in your garden.

The routines of the house must be respected at all times. Students should be quiet if returning to the house after 22:00, refraining in particular from playing music, making telephone calls or taking showers after other members of the household are in bed.

Please notify St. Clare's of any additional house rules you have. This will help to avoid any confusion.

Communications

Most students can keep in touch with friends and family via mobile phone or internet in college. Incoming calls to the homestay address may be necessary on occasions, and particularly on arrival day. Outgoing calls should not be permitted, except in emergency. Please note that St. Clare's cannot be held responsible for any calls made by

the student. All communications should be kept to a quiet volume and not permitted after 22:00.

An increasingly large number of students bring their own lap-tops and are expecting Wi-Fi access in the home. You will be asked at time of booking whether you can accommodate this request since it is often a condition of the booking.

Getting to and from school

Students may be unfamiliar with using public transport and need reassurance. Please point out the nearest bus stops and recommend the best bus to catch for the journey between your home and school. It would be a great help if you could provide a local bus timetable.

Doctors and dentists

As a general rule medical care is free for students from EU countries whereas others must pay for consultations and treatment. If a student has a serious accident or emergency, an ambulance should be called immediately.

If a student is ill, you should arrange an appointment with your GP or consult the college nurse during weekday mornings or the Student Services Officer at other times. Please keep St. Clare's informed at all times.

Legal and contractual arrangements

Payments

Payment by bank transfer is made by St. Clare's on behalf of the student on a weekly basis. Calculations are made on the number of nights of the stay. No additional charges may be levied on the student unless previously approved by St. Clare's.

The agreement may be terminated either by you or the college giving seven days' notice, prior to or during the student's stay. You will, therefore, be entitled to up to seven days' compensation from the date of notification by the college. If a student fails to arrive or leaves through no fault of the homestay provider a substitute booking will be arranged. If no substitute is available then compensation will amount to seven days' payment.

If it is necessary to change an existing student's accommodation for any reason, one week's notice must be given by one of the parties - homestay provider, student or St. Clare's. Compensation will be withheld if breach of contract conditions has occurred. If payment has been made in excess of the notice period, you will be required to refund the difference to St. Clare's.

Taxation

Letting a room to a student home can be very cost effective. Depending on your income from hosting students, you may have to complete the Land & Property pages of the self-assessment tax return from the Inland Revenue. For more information: www.hmrc.gov.uk

Insurance & damage

You are strongly advised to inform your insurance company when you accept a student in your home and your cover for 'contents and buildings' will normally be extended accordingly. You need to be covered for loss or damage caused by the student or accident to the student within the house. Please note that St. Clare's accepts no responsibility for such eventualities.

Safety in the home

Providers and students must be aware of the dangers in the home. This means fire risk assessments and fitted smoke detectors. Gas appliances should be installed and serviced each year by an approved gas fitter. A Landlord Gas Safety Certificate (CP12) must be sent to us annually, as well as any other relevant documentation.

It might be appropriate to discuss hazards with your student: voltage and the dangers of overloading, switching off appliances, access to medication, trip hazards such as stairs and cables etc.

Disclosure & Barring Scheme

St Clare's is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults on all its sites. This means in practice that prospective homestay providers are asked to sign a declaration to complete an enhanced DBS clearance. We will also require two character references.

Under-18 year olds

Any under-18 year old is defined as a 'child' although the law recognises that the nearer a child gets to 18, the greater the child's ability to take decisions for him or herself. Each member of staff and each homestay provider has a 'duty of care' to protect children from harmful behaviour and influences.

In practice this means that you should provide appropriate supervision at all times: under-18 year olds should not be left in the house alone at night; under-18 year old females should be supervised by an adult female; and under-18 year olds are normally subject to a curfew. (Curfew is 23:00 from Sunday to Thursday and 24:00 on Friday and Saturday and any infringements should be reported by 9:00 the following morning.)

Arrivals and Departures

On specific arrival days you may be asked to collect your student/s from St. Clare's. Likewise, some students may need to be dropped at St. Clare's on their departure day. The Student Services Officer will contact you in advance with all the details. We ask that you try to accommodate these requests but appreciate that it is not always possible, in which case you should discuss with the Student Services Officer

Emergency contacts

St. Clare's has built strong relationships with its homestay providers over the years. We see it very much as a partnership and a member of our team is always ready to help if the need arises.

Please contact 01865 517711 during office hours for routine problems. Please contact 07967 542621 for genuine emergencies.

For more information please, please visit: stclares.ac.uk/homestay