ST ALBANS SECONDARY COLLEGE
Main Road East, St Albans Vic 3021
Tel: 03 9366 2555  Fax: 03 9367 9361

International Students Program Handbook

This Handbook provides advice and support to homestay hosts, relatives providing accommodation, international students and their parents. It outlines expectations and responsibilities in relation to the provision of accommodation, welfare arrangements and academic support for international students at St Albans Secondary College.

This Handbook should be read in conjunction with the International Students Program Accommodation & Welfare Policy.

Homestay

Homestay is a term used to describe full board accommodation offered by a couple or single person for which a set weekly fee is charged.

The fee covers the following expenses:

- Private bedroom with study facilities including a desk, bookcase and study lamp
- Three healthy meals per day, seven days a week
- Electricity, gas and water
- Linen and cooking and eating utensils
- Laundry facilities
- Cleaning

The homestay fee does not cover:

- Telephone usage (see below)
- Excessive use of the internet
- Student’s personal products such as shampoo, soap, toothbrushes, etc.

Charges and payment

Prices for homestay accommodation are amounts agreed to by the student, their parent, the college and the homestay provider.

- A range between A$180 and A$200 is suggested depending on services and facilities offered. The exact amount will be confirmed in writing in the Homestay Responsibility Agreement prior to acceptance of the student.
- A refundable bond of two weeks rent will be payable by the student prior to his/her arrival.
- Homestay providers will indicate their preferred method of payment i.e. by cash every fortnight, or by bank deposit every four weeks.
- Students will reasonably expect to continue their homestay arrangements over the holidays, although there may be times when alternative arrangements need to be made. If a student returns home during the holidays, they will be expected to pay a holding fee to secure their homestay for the following term or year. If they do not return, the holding fee will be forfeited.
- Homestay charges and method of payment are not to be changed or negotiated for six months from the student’s arrival.
Police and Working with Children Checks

All members of the homestay family who are over 18 years of age are required to provide to the school a current Working with Children Check.

Privacy

Privacy is a very important, and the personal possessions and space of the students must be respected.

- Students should have their own key to the residence
- Locks for bedroom and bathroom doors should be provided
- Members of the homestay family should not expect to share or use goods that belong to the students.

House rules

A clear and flexible approach to discipline, house rules and cooperative living is advisable.

- House rules should be clearly explained to students on their arrival
- Homestay hosts need to be aware that some students may have had servants in their own country and may not be used to doing household chores
- Students need to be aware that Australian families share household chores, and that they will be expected to do their share. This will include keeping their own room tidy and leaving the bathroom dry and tidy after use
- Curfew times, travel arrangements and social outings should be mutually agreed upon taking into consideration the age and maturity of the student
- Having friends to visit, or to stay for a meal or overnight will need to be arranged beforehand with the family, and can only be done with their consent. This also applies to the student staying overnight at a friend’s home, or not being home for a meal.
- Arrangements for telephone use need to be clearly agreed from the start as some students rely heavily on the international telephone system
- Most students have their own mobile phone. The ISC will help each new student to purchase a SIM card for their phone and/or a phonecard to call home.
- It may be necessary to negotiate appropriate hours for using the telephone
- Some students have been known to stay up very late at night. It is often to study or sometimes because that is usual when they are at home. The homestay family’s needs and preferences in this area should be made known to the student. For example, it may not be fair on other members of the family to have the student making phone calls, watching television, or wandering around the house late at night.
- Students must not be expected to act as babysitters.
- The use of the family computer by the student for schoolwork is reasonable. Excessive computer and internet use for social communication and games is not acceptable.
- Students are not permitted to stay out late during the school week except for college functions.

Attendance

St Albans SC has a 90% Attendance Policy for all students. Teachers record attendance electronically for each class of the day.

If a student is absent they must provide a note or medical certificate to their Year Level Coordinator as soon as they return to school.

Year Level Coordinators and the ISC check attendance each day.
Procedure for dealing with attendance problems:

- If attendance falls to 90%, the student and parents will be notified and the student will be given counselling to address attendance problems.
- If attendance falls below 90%, the student will be placed on a School Performance Contract. The student’s homestay, their parents, and the ISPU will be notified. A copy of the Contract will be sent to the parents and ISPU.
- If attendance falls to 85%, the student will inform the ISPU of the breach of the School Performance Contract. ISPU will organise a meeting with the Principal, the International Student Coordinator, and the student to discuss attendance. The student will be placed on an ISPU contract for review in 2-4 weeks, and the parents informed. The school will update ISPU each fortnight.
- If attendance falls below 80%, ISPU will report the student to DIAC.

Student illness

Students are covered by Medibank Private for health insurance and by the Ambulance Subscribers’ Scheme.

- Homestay hosts should record the students’ membership numbers and details.
- Any medical costs not covered by Medibank Private, and any other services such as dental or optical must be paid for by the student.
- Homestay hosts should contact the student’s family and the school representative immediately in the case of a serious illness or emergency.

Supporting the student’s academic progress and social wellbeing

It is expected that guardians & homestay hosts and the College will work together to support and monitor the student’s academic & social development.

Guardians & homestay hosts can assist by:

- supporting the student to adjust to a different education system.
- talking with the student about life & cultural expectations in Australia.
- ensuring that the student eats well & gets enough sleep.
- encouraging the student to be an active member of the family including participating in activities & family life, helping out with household duties, etc.
- ensuring that the student attends school (St Albans SC has a 90% Attendance Policy for all students), follows the school rules, and completes all required work on time.
- attending Parent-Teacher interviews to hear about how the student is progressing. Dates & booking sheets for the interviews are in the front of the Student Diary.
- advising the Year Level Coordinator or Ms Truong as soon as possible if the student is absent from school for any reason.

The College will support students by:

- closely monitoring the student’s attendance and academic progress, and reporting to parents & guardians in writing each semester, at Parent-Teacher interviews, and at other times as required.
- providing an Orientation Program for students and their guardians and host families.
- visiting students at their homestay each semester.
- providing professional counselling and support services for students who require it.
- maintaining regular contact with the student, and their teacher, whilst he/she is studying at the English Language Centre.
- supporting students in Years 9-12 to choose appropriate VCE subjects and tertiary courses through the school’s Managed Individual Pathways program. This includes:
- careers advice and programs in Years 9, 10 and 11
- individual course counselling interview for each student in Years 9, 10 and 11
- VCE Information Evening for Year 10 students
- tertiary course advice and individual support to complete tertiary application for each student
- individual follow up with each student in their first year of tertiary study.

Procedure for dealing with unsatisfactory academic performance:

- If the student is starting to perform unsatisfactorily academically, the student will be counselled, and the parents & ISPU will be notified.
- If there is little or no improvement, the student will be placed on a School Performance Contract. A copy of the Contract will be sent to the parents and ISPU.
- If the student breaches the school Contract, they will be placed on an ISPU contract. Students breaching ISPU contracts will be reported to DIAC.

Paid Work

Students over the age of 15 years are able to work part-time. A part-time job can be an excellent way for students to improve their English language skills and to learn more about Australian society. However, school and study must be the first priority, and work hours should not interfere with this at any stage.

- Homestay hosts and the ISC will monitor students’ part-time work closely.
- If work is having a negative effect on their study, the school will advise the student’s parents and request that the part-time work be reduced or stopped.

Dispute Resolution Procedures

St Albans SC is committed to resolving any issues and dealing with complaints fairly, promptly and confidentially.

- Any complaints or concerns that cannot be dealt with by the student and the homestay family should be referred to the International Students Coordinator.
- The ISC will investigate the complaint and, if necessary, will refer the matter to the Principal.
- In a case where the complaint cannot be resolved at the school level, the complaint will be referred by the Principal to the International Student Program Unit (ISPU) for formal investigation.
- This will require that the details of the complaint are lodged in writing.
- The ISPU Complaints & Appeals Policy will then be used (refer to International Students Program - Key Policies).

Student Code of Conduct

The Student Code of Conduct outlines the College's expectations and rules regarding students’ behaviour and attendance.

Key Policies

Students, their parents or guardians, and homestay providers must be familiar with the following important school policies:

- Attendance Policy
- Promotion Policy
- Uniform Policy
- Student Code of Conduct
- Accommodation & Welfare Policy
Care arrangements and contact details

- **Homestay:**
  Students will need to be able to contact their homestay family to notify them of a change of plans, or in case of an emergency.

  Homestay hosts should make sure that the student has all relevant contact details, including home, work and mobile phone numbers, as well as contact details for a relative or close family friend.

- **School:**
  The College Principal, Ms Kerrie Dowsley, is responsible for the welfare of International Students living in Third Party or School Arranged homestay.

  St Albans Secondary College’s International Students Coordinator (ISC), Ms Miranda Truong, is the school’s contact person after hours, on weekends, and during the holidays.

  - Ms Truong’s & Ms Dowsley’s contact details will be provided to the homestay family, and to the student on their arrival. Students will be given an Emergency Card with all relevant contact details.
  - Ms Truong speaks Vietnamese, Cantonese, Mandarin, & Teochiu. Interpreters will be arranged for all other languages.