



International Students Program Homestay Policy and Handbook

Rational

This Policy and Handbook provide advice and support to homestay hosts, relatives providing accommodation, and to 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.

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.

Where parents opt for the Department of Education and Training (DET) to arrange accommodation, the Department through the school, is responsible for provision of homestay accommodation, support and general welfare to the student. In Victoria, homestay can be school arranged (Option 4), or family arranged where the international student's parents wish to nominate a specific person (Option 3 Third Party) to provide accommodation for their child, but where that individual is not a parent or Department of Home Affairs (DHA) approved relative able to provide welfare.

These arrangements must be in place for the period that the student will be under 18 years of age while in Australia. This policy has been developed to meet the requirements of the ESOS National Code 2018, the Student visa Condition 8532 and the VRQA *Guidelines for the Enrolment of Overseas Students Aged Under 18 Years* which require that appropriate arrangements have been made for the accommodation, welfare and support of students less than 18 years of age.

This policy is designed to be consistent with the International Education Division (IED) guidelines. Please read the information carefully before signing the Homestay Responsibility Agreement.

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. This fee covers all expenses associated with providing food and shelter to an international student. The school manages the day-to-day coordination of student support, accommodation and welfare through the school's International Student Coordinator (ISC). The broader oversight of student welfare role is undertaken by the Principal.

Students, homestay providers and the school welfare manager (Principal) will be asked to sign a Homestay Responsibility Agreement on commencement of the student's enrolment. This will outline the house rules and requirements, as well as homestay costs and methods of payment.

- The school will organise homestay accommodation of high quality and which provides a child safe, comfortable and caring environment.
- The homestay host must be at least 21 year of age.
- The maximum number of international students per homestay is 3 at all times, regardless of the provider.
- Homestay host parents must reside in the same building as the international student/s to ensure appropriate supervision.
- An international student will be carefully matched to a compatible homestay family. Suitability will be determined according to the information provided on the homestay profile.

- The school will monitor homestay arrangements, including twice yearly visits to verify that the accommodation continues to meet all requirements.
- The school will conduct annual training for all homestay providers including the School's Child Safe and CCYP Reportable Conduct Scheme policy and procedures.
- It is a condition of enrolment at St Albans Secondary College that all international students must reside in homestay accommodation (including students who are over 18) until the end date of the CAAW, or if they return home if aged under 18, or until the end of the study period if aged over 18.

The homestay fee covers the following expenses:

- a separate single bedroom with study facilities including a desk, bookcase and study lamp
- use of living areas within the home
- three healthy meals per day, seven days a week
- electricity, gas, water and heating
- linen, towels and cooking and eating utensils
- laundry facilities
- cleaning of common living areas.

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.

Arrival Support

The International Student Coordinator at the school will contact the homestay host as soon as the student's arrival details are finalised. The student will be collected from the airport by a representative from the school and brought to your home.

- In some cases, homestay families may wish to provide airport support to the student on their arrival and this should be negotiated with the school.
- Sometimes there may be a delay in the arrival of a student due to the length of time taken to obtain a visa. Please let the International Student Coordinator at the host school know how long you are willing to keep the homestay placement available.

Charges and payment

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

- A weekly fee of between A\$300 – A\$350 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. The initial payment will include two weeks' fees in advance plus a refundable bond of two weeks fees. This will be held by the school.
- Homestay providers will indicate their preferred method of payment, either:
 1. The student's family can choose to pay the entire homestay costs, at the agreed homestay rate, to the school. The school holds this money in trust and pays the agreed homestay rate to the homestay provider fortnightly or monthly, or
 2. The school can assist the student's parents and the homestay provider to establish a payment method through which the parents pay money directly to the school or homestay provider each fortnight or month.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that homestay accommodation payment methods avoid the student being involved in the transaction.
- Homestay charges and method of payment are not to be changed or negotiated for six months from the student's arrival.
- Students and/or parents are required to reimburse homestay providers for any damage to property caused by the student, or costs incurred by the student during their time of residence.
- 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. This will be negotiated between the homestay, the student and the school. If they do not return, the holding fee will be forfeited.

Working with Children Checks

All members of the homestay family who are over 18 years of age who reside at the homestay or frequently reside there are required to provide to the school a current Working with Children Check (WWCC).

- The WWCC must be kept current throughout the student's stay, or until they turn 18
- Prior to any additional adults commencing residence at the homestay, the homestay host must advise the school and provide the WWCC.
- More information on the WWC Check can be found at the [Working with Children Check website](#)¹ or from the WWC Check information line 1300 652 879 (local call charge).
- Once you have filled in the online application form, you need to go to a [participating Australia Post retail outlet](#)² to lodge your application.
- As part of the school's child safe screening of potential homestay hosts, the school will also check the personal identification of homestay providers to confirm their identity and conduct referee checking to confirm suitability for child connected work.

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
- 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.
- 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. Contact details include name and phone number, of the person they are with must be provided to the family.
- 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.

¹ <http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/home/applications/lodging+your+application>

² <http://auspost.com.au/>

Terminating the homestay arrangements

- If a homestay provider wishes to terminate the homestay agreement, at least two weeks' notice is given to the student and school. Any advance payments should be refunded to the student.
- Where a student ends the homestay arrangement, at least two weeks' notice must be given to the homestay provider and school. Giving less notice than this may result in the bond being forfeited.
- Students and homestay providers may not change the homestay arrangements without consultation with the School and through the Homestay Responsibility Agreement.
- It is a condition of enrolment at St Albans Secondary College that all international students must reside in homestay accommodation (including students who are over 18) until the end date of the CAAW or if they return home if aged under 18, or until the end of the study period if aged over 18.

Attendance

St Albans Secondary College has a 90% Attendance Policy for all students. Teachers record attendance electronically for each class of the day on Compass, the school's learning management portal.

- 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.
- Notifications of late arrival to school and of absence are sent via SMS to homestay **hosts 2 times** each day
- Parents and homestay hosts are able to check the student's attendance on Compass.
- Procedure for dealing with attendance issues:
 - 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 ISSU will be notified. A copy of the Contract will be sent to the parents and ISSU.
 - if attendance falls to 85%, the school will inform the ISSU of the breach of the School Performance Contract. ISSU will organise a meeting with the Principal, the International Student Coordinator, and the student to discuss attendance. The student will be placed on an ISSU contract for review in 2-4 weeks, and the parents will be informed. The school will update ISSU each fortnight.
 - if attendance falls below 80%, ISSU will report the student to DHA.

School holidays

Students need to inform their school and host family in advance if they are returning home for the school holidays or in limited circumstances, with parental permission, staying with local relatives/friends.

- If a student is not returning home for the holidays but will be away from the homestay family home, the school must be informed and written permission is also required from the student's parents.
- Suitable arrangements regarding the student's holiday plans should be made prior to the student's departure.
- Dates of departure and return are at the discretion of the host school's Principal who will take into consideration the attendance requirements mandated under the student's visa conditions.

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 parents and homestay hosts and the College will work together to support and monitor the student's academic and social development.

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 forms for the interviews are available on Compass
- advising the Year Level Coordinator or the ISC 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 and homestay hosts in writing 3 times each semester, at Parent-Teacher interviews once each semester, and at other times as required. Written reports are provided to families through Compass.
- providing an Orientation Program for students and their homestay hosts
- visiting students at their homestay each semester
- providing professional counselling and support services through the Wellbeing and Careers Teams 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 applications 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 & ISSU 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 ISSU
- If the student breaches the school Contract, they will be placed on an ISSU contract. Students breaching ISSU contracts will be reported to DHA.

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
- Our school recommends no more than 10 hours per week of part-time work for all VCE students.

Click [here](#) for information on employment rights and conditions in Victoria.

Complaints Policy and Procedures

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

- Any complaints or concerns that cannot be resolved 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 in writing by the Principal to the International Education Division of the Department of Education and Training for formal investigation.

To view the Complaints Policy please click [here](#) and go to School Policies

Student Code of Conduct

The Student [Code of Conduct](#) outlines the College's expectations and rules regarding students' behaviour.

Key Policies

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

- [Attendance Policy](#)
- [Child Safety Code of Conduct Homestay Providers](#)
- Promotion Policy
- [Uniform Policy](#)
- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Management Policy
- [Child Safety Policy](#), [Reporting Obligations](#) and [Code of Conduct](#)

Copies of these policies are included on the College website, on Compass, and in the Orientation Pack.

Child Safety

The care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people is a central and fundamental responsibility of our school. Providing a child safe environment as part of our Options 3 and 4 homestay program is an essential element of this responsibility.

- The school ensures that its [Child Safety Policy](#), [Reporting Obligations](#) and Child Safety [Code of Conduct](#) are available to students, parents and homestay providers via the website and Compass.

Click [here](#) for more information on how to support a culture of no tolerance of child abuse.

Welfare arrangements and responsibilities

Homestay hosts:

Students 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.
- Homestay providers are not responsible for the student's overall welfare, and any welfare issues concerning the student should be immediately raised with the school's International Student Coordinator or Principal.
- Homestay hosts must be familiar and comply with Melbourne Fire Brigade (MFB) guidelines for installing, operating, testing and maintaining smoke detectors. Visit the [MFB's website](#)³.
- Remind students of the following for their own safety:
 - it is advisable not to carry too much cash or valuables
 - 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

³ <http://mfb.vic.gov.au/Community/Home-Safety/SmokeAlarms.html>

- avoid risky areas in Melbourne at night.

School:

The College Principal, Ms Kerrie Dowsley, is responsible for the accommodation, support and welfare of International Students living in Third Party (Option 3) or School Arranged (Option 4) homestay. This includes overseeing:

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

St Albans Secondary College's International Students Coordinator (ISC) is the school's contact person after hours, on weekends, and during the holidays. The ISC manages day-to-day support including:

- periodic (at least twice yearly) review of accommodation, support and welfare arrangements for all international students
- critical incident management
- liaison with the DET IED regarding complex or significant international student management matters (eg critical incidents)
- oversight of international student program management
- giving interim consent to medical treatment in emergencies
- dispute resolution where issues relate to homestay
- providing homestay hosts with an induction program prior to an overseas student arriving and annual training to develop knowledge of:
 - the needs of adolescents
 - cultural, linguistic and religious differences
 - the needs of young people away from their home environment
 - Child Safe Legislation and CCYP Reportable Conduct Scheme obligations and procedures
 - flexible approaches to matters of discipline, house rules and cooperative living
 - what to do if a problem occurs.

Student:

Students should be 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 by placing valuables in a safety deposit box or with the homestay family for safekeeping and not leaving them lying around the house.

Click [here](#) for information about legal rights of young people in Victoria.

Contact details and student safety card

Each student, their homestay host and parents are provided on arrival with 24/7 contact details for the school, the International Students Coordinator, and the Principal on a student safety card.

The school's email is st.albans.sc@edumail.vic.gov.au

The school's website is www.stalbanssc.vic.edu.au

To see what St Albans has to offer click here <https://www.whereis.com/vic/st-albans-3021>