



# **STUDY EXPERIENCE STUDENT HANDBOOK**

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A School of the Society of the Sacred Advent

**Homestay STUDENT Handbook**

St Aidan's Anglican Girls School

CRICOS Provider Number 01194K

Version #2 April 2017

## From the Principal



Thank you for joining our St. Aidan's community as a student living in homestay accommodation. I hope that your time with us is educationally rewarding, enjoyable and something that will be a memorable experience for you.

At our school, we take the care and concern of our students very seriously. We aim to work closely with members of the school family, parents, caregivers and homestay families, to ensure that every student at our school enjoys a rich and stimulating school life and achieves her academic and other personal goals.

While in Australia we encourage you to immerse yourself as much as you can in family life and take this opportunity to learn not only English but to learn about Australia; our history, heritage and culture.

At school, we are all here to help you and ensure that your study program is challenging and that you meet success. I look forward to welcoming you to our school.

Karen Spiller  
MBA, MEdAdmin, BA, BEdSt, FACE, FAIM, FACEL, FAHRI, FAICD, FCEOI  
**Principal - St Aidan's Anglican Girls' School**

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## SECTION 1

# Important Information for Homestay Students

Australia is a diverse country and Brisbane is a multi-cultural city. One third of the people who live in Brisbane were not born in Australia. Half the people who live in Brisbane have one or both of their parents who were not born in Australia. Our multiculturalism is one of the reasons that Australians are so accepting and welcoming of international students. In Australia, we value diversity and treat all people as equals, regardless of their race, religion or cultural background.

Our Homestay program reflects the diversity of Brisbane's population. Homestay families come from many different racial and cultural backgrounds. This is what Australia is like.

There are many different types of families who host Homestay students. These are some examples of the different types of families who host Homestay students:

- Two parents with their own children
- A couple whose children have grown up and moved out of the home
- A single parent with children
- A young couple with no children
- An extended family where the household also includes other family members such as grandparents
- A single person with no children

When we are assessing the suitability of a Homestay family, we assess these things:

- They are a friendly, kind and welcoming family.
- They will provide a caring home, food and supervision for the student.
- There are enough rooms in the home for the student to have their own bedroom.
- They speak English as their main language.
- There are suitable transport options for the student to travel to and from school. Usually this is by bus or train.
- They hold a valid Blue Card for Working with Children.

In Australia, it is illegal and unacceptable to discriminate or make judgements about people based on looks, race, religion, gender or cultural background.

The school cannot, and will not, accept Homestay student requests to be placed with families of any particular racial or cultural background.

The school will not accept a student refusing a Homestay placement based on a family's race or cultural background.



These people and families are all Australians. Our Homestay families reflect the cultural diversity of Australian society.



## **Being part of a Homestay family**

Homestay families are kind and caring people who have volunteered to provide a home for a student.

We expect that all Homestay families will be treated with respect by students. Showing disrespect to a Homestay family is unacceptable. We expect Homestay families to treat students with equal respect. Some ways that you will show respect for your Homestay family are:

- Following the house rules
- Contributing to the family and home. This might include things like doing some chores such as cleaning or laundry and keeping your own things tidy.
- Interacting with the family. You are to participate in family meals and outings. You are to spend time in the company of family members.
- Asking permission in advance to attend social outings with friends, and providing your Homestay parents with information about where you are going, who you will be with and when you will be home.
- Eating the same food that other members of the household eat.
- Being kind in the way you speak to your Homestay family.

If you show disrespect to a homestay family or do not follow the house rules you might be asked to leave. Sometimes finding another family for you to live with is not possible and you may have to return to your home country,

If you would like to move Homestay you must speak with the International Student Coordinator or Dean of Students. You must not ask another family if you can move to their house.

There are sometimes good reasons why students ask to move and we can work out an arrangement. It usually takes some time to find a new Homestay. Sometimes we will say you cannot move or we will not have another family available for you to move to.

## **How long do International Students stay with a family?**

Students come to Australia for varying lengths of time. Visiting Study Experience students generally stay for between 4 and 10 weeks. Long term students may stay for several years.

Some students change families during their time in Australia to maximise the variety of their experience. This is no reflection on the family they have been staying with. Others stay with the same family for years. There is no definite pattern and what works for one student may not work for another.

## **Homestay Parents**

Homestay parents assume the role *in loco parentis* (Latin for 'in place of a parent'). *In loco parentis* describes a relationship to the child similar to that of a parent. This means that whilst you are staying in their home, they assume all aspects of parental care and responsibility for you during your stay.

This means things like you will be expected to comply with directions and instructions from homestay parents. You must ask permission to attend social outings and events, and respect that for a variety of reasons your homestay parent may sometimes say no. You will be expected to comply with all house rules and contribute to the household as a member of the family. Your homestay parents may insist you see a doctor if you are ill. Homestay parents will monitor your school work and academic progress.

### **What if it doesn't work?**

Occasionally there is a simple mismatch of a student and homestay family. In this case mediation is the first response, which will be coordinated by the school. If an acceptable solution is not reached a new placement may be found for the student if all parties are in agreement.

A change of Homestay can be requested by either the student or homestay family. This will be negotiated on an individual basis, depending on circumstances. A fee may apply.

### **International Homestay Coordinator**

The role of the International Homestay Coordinator includes:

- Recruiting and screening potential Homestay families.
- Arranging suitable placements for students.
- Being available to help with any difficulties or adjustment issues either in the home or at school.
- Liaising with other school staff, parents and agencies regarding student's welfare or home situations.

A 24-hour emergency contact number will be provided to all international students and families.

## SECTION 2

# What Will My Homestay Family Provide?

The minimum requirements homestay families are expected to provide include:

### **Bedroom**

A separate bedroom with a single bed (including appropriate linen/blankets), wardrobe, desk and chair. The room must have adequate lighting for study, heating and cooling/ventilation. The bedroom is recognised as your own private area. You will be expected to keep your room clean and tidy. Your homestay parent may request to inspect your room from time to time. In most homes food is not allowed in bedrooms.

### **Bathroom**

A shared or private bathroom, with adequate time allowed for showers. Toiletry items, such as soap, shampoo/conditioner, sanitary napkins or tampons, toilet paper, toothbrush, toothpaste and towels will be provided by the homestay family.

### **Use of Common Facilities**

You will share the common facilities in the home. This includes such things as living spaces, kitchen, television, swimming pool (if available) and yard.

Some special items may be off limits, such as musical instruments or personal computers. Your homestay family will clearly explain this to you. Similarly, they will show you the areas of the home that are private spaces, such as other bedrooms, ensuite bathroom or home office. You will be expected to respect these boundaries.

### **Meals**

All meals are provided by the homestay family, including fruit and some snack food. You may wish to go food shopping with them in the first few weeks to discuss options.

You will be provided with breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks such as morning and afternoon tea daily.

*Breakfast* – In most homes this is a rushed meal. Family members generally help themselves to breakfast foods such as toast, cereal, fruit, tea, coffee, juice or milk. On some occasions this may be a more formal family meal.

*Lunch* – Homestay families will make, or provide the ingredients for you to make, a healthy packed lunch during the school week. This could include such things as sandwiches, wraps, rice, noodles and salads. Similar types of food will be available to you for lunch on the weekend. Students in Australia eat a cold lunch at school. There are not facilities for students to heat food at school for lunch.

If you decide not to take lunch from home, food may be purchased from the school Tuckshop. This will be at your own expense. If you decide not to eat a meal at home, such as lunch on a weekend, you are responsible for purchasing your own food.

*Dinner* – This is usually the main meal of the day. It is usually a healthy, hot meal. If the homestay family decide to eat a family meal at a restaurant or another location other than the home, the homestay family is responsible for any expenses incurred. You do not have to pay for your meal. If you do not attend this meal, the homestay family must ensure you are provided with a suitable meal option at home.

*Snacks* – You will have access to snack foods such as fruit, biscuits, cake, yoghurt, etc for morning and afternoon tea.

We encourage you to discuss foods you like and dislike with your homestay family.

All foods you cannot eat for medical or dietary reasons must be listed on your Homestay Application Form

### **Allergies**

All medical and allergy information received by the school will be passed onto the homestay family upon placement. All medically diagnosed allergies must be listed on the Homestay Application Form. On arrival, please make sure your homestay family are aware of any foods you do not eat for medical, cultural or religious reasons.

### **Laundry**

The laundering of clothing, linen and towels and ironing of the school uniform is the responsibility of the homestay family. You may be asked to assist with laundry as part of your contribution to the household. It is your responsibility to ensure your washing is placed in the appropriate place so that laundry is done on time.

### **Access**

You will be provided with keys, passwords and/or alarm codes so you can access the home at any time.

### **Telephone**

You are required to carry a mobile phone at your own expense with an Australian SIM card that has enough credit to make phone calls to your homestay family if necessary. If you would like to use the home phone to ring family overseas, your homestay family will assist you to purchase a pre-paid International Phone Card (usually available from a newsagency or convenience store). You will need to pay for this yourself.

Homestay parents will provide you with their mobile phone numbers and other contact details.

You must provide your homestay family with your mobile phone number.

## **Internet & Technology Usage**

As part of your school enrolment you will be provided with a laptop computer for home and school use.

Homestay families will provide access to home internet for all school related purposes.

In Australia home internet plans vary greatly. Most home plans have data and download limits, and exceeding these limits can be very expensive. Additional internet usage (beyond schoolwork) will be negotiated between you and the homestay family. Clear guidelines, such as time limits and download limits, will be presented to you. If you ignore or exceed these limits you will bear any additional costs incurred. The homestay family may restrict your internet usage.

You may purchase your own mobile WIFI prepaid internet data if you require extra usage the family cannot provide. Even when using your own mobile WIFI data house rules regarding internet usage, such as time limitations and appropriate content, will be observed.

Your homestay family will monitor your internet usage, including checking what you have been accessing and the time you are spending online. This is common practice for parents in Australia. If you are accessing the internet in your bedroom via computer or mobile device, you will be expected to leave the door open with the monitor/screen in full view. Homestay parents may restrict the time you spend online for recreational usage (such as using social media, watching movies, etc).

It is school policy that no Homestay student can keep internet connected devices (such as laptops, tablets, mobile phones, etc) in their bedroom overnight on school nights. Homestay parents are asked to make sure all technology is out of bedrooms no later than 10pm (in some cases it may be earlier than this depending on the family routine). You will be expected to comply with this. Your Homestay family will show you where your devices are to be placed overnight.

This policy is for your health and safety. We want to make sure all students are getting adequate sleep so you are well prepared for learning the next day.

## **Security**

In Australia, houses have locks on external doors and windows. Some houses also have an alarm system.

Australian houses do not generally have locks on bedroom doors. It is considered a fire hazard and dangerous practice in our country. Homestay houses will not have locks on bedroom doors because of this fire safety risk.

Most bathroom doors have locks.

## SECTION 3

# Participating in Family Life

A vital aspect of homestay is for you to experience everyday life as a participating family member.

It may take time to get to know each other and feel completely relaxed in the home. This is normal.

You can approach your Homestay family if there are difficulties, either in the home or at school. It is ok to ask for help or clarification if there is something you do not understand. Likewise, homestay families should feel equally comfortable addressing any issues with you.

For serious concerns or ongoing struggles, school staff may be able to assist in facilitating communication.

### **General Behaviour**

You are required to show respect to the homestay family members and comply with household rules and routines.

You are to respect and abide by family rules and behaviour expectations. This may include such things as internet/television/mobile phone restrictions, participating in family activities and meal times etc.

You must ask permission from your Homestay parent before organising any social activity, outing or event. In some cases your Homestay parent will say no and you will be expected to comply with this. Your Homestay parents must always know where you are, who you are with and when you will be home.

Disrespect of your Homestay parent's authority, failing to follow family rules and routines, disobedience or failing to comply with instructions and directions given by your Homestay parent will not be tolerated.

### **Names**

Your homestay family will discuss with you how to address each member of the family. This includes what to call homestay carers and extended family members you may interact with such as grandparents, aunts/uncles, etc.

### **Chores**

You will be expected to participate as a member of the family. It is not common in Australia for households to employ domestic help. Chores such as cleaning, shopping, food preparation, laundry etc are mostly completed by family members. It is expected that you will help with normal household chores such as doing dishes, light cleaning, etc. You must keep your own bedroom clean and tidy.

## **Curfews**

A curfew is the time when you are expected to have returned home by. Curfews are common place in Australian families.

You are expected to return home straight after school each day unless a prior arrangement has been made and you have asked permission from your Homestay parent.

It is up to the homestay family as to what curfew they wish to set for you.

Families may restrict your social activities if school work is suffering.

As per our school policy, your homestay family will enforce a technology curfew (the time by which devices such as mobile phones and computers must be switched off for the night). Your homestay family will also request that devices like mobile phones and laptop computers are not left in your bedroom overnight. You will be shown where to store them. This may be in a common family space such as study or kitchen.

## **Daily Routines**

In Australia the day usually begins by waking up between 6am and 7am. Breakfast is usually between 6am and 7:30am. The school day starts at 8:30am and finishes at 3:25pm. Lunch is generally between 12pm and 2pm and dinner between 5:30pm and 7:30pm. Bedtime for school students is usually around 9-10pm.

School days are Monday to Friday. Family routines may be more relaxed on Saturdays and Sundays.

These are general guidelines. Some individual families may have varying routines to this.

Your family will set a bed time for you and you will be expected to comply.

## SECTION 4

# School Requirements

### **Attendance**

Student visas carry attendance requirements.

You must attend school every day unless you are unwell or an emergency situation occurs.

If you are too ill to attend school, your homestay parent will inform the school prior to the commencement of the school day. You may be required to see a doctor if you are sick.

If necessary, you may attend medical or dental appointments during the school day. Your homestay family will transport you to and from such appointments.

Truancy and unjustified absences will be dealt with according to school policy.

When at school you are required to attend all your timetabled lessons and classes. Sometimes there will also be special events such as school camp, sports days or excursions that you will be required to attend.

You may not attend vacations with homestay families during school terms. If your homestay family has a vacation scheduled during the school term alternative accommodation will be provided for you during their absence.

You may not travel back to your home country during school terms. The only exception to this is an emergency situation, such as a death or grave illness in the family. In this case your family will need to contact the school prior to making any travel arrangements.

### **Homework**

The homestay family will ensure you have adequate time and space (as per the schools stated homework guidelines) to complete all homework.

It is ok to ask your homestay family for assistance with homework.

Teachers may contact homestay families if there are issues concerning things such as non-completion of homework, etc.

### **School Uniform**

You must wear the correct school uniform as per the school policy. A school uniform and sports uniform will be provided to Study Experience students for the duration of your stay.

You must provide your own shoes. These must be plain dark brown laced, leather shoes. You must also provide your own sports shoes.

## **Transport**

Homestay families will ensure you have transport to and from school at the required times. This may be by public transport, the St Aidan's School Bus service or private vehicle. St Aidan's will provide a travel card known as a Go Card if you travel to school by public transport.

You will not travel alone on public transport after dark.

Your homestay family will transport you to and from additional school activities, such as evening events or sport.

Homestay families will not charge you extra for transport.

## **School Interviews & Events**

Homestay parents will attend things such as interviews with school staff regarding your welfare, academic progress, attendance or subject selection. Homestay parents are encouraged to attend special events with you, such as awards ceremonies, graduation, performances, etc.

## **Extra-Curricular Activities**

St Aidan's students have a wonderful opportunity to participate in a wide variety of extra activities, such as sport, music, drama, clubs and special events. Participation in extra-curricular activities is a great way to make friends and integrate into the school community.

## **Behaviour**

School rules are designed to keep you safe and ensure you have a good experience at St Aidan's.

You must to comply with the rules and expectations outlined in this handbook and the school code of conduct.

Bad behaviour, rudeness or disobedience at school or in homestay will not be tolerated. Unacceptable behaviour may result in the school cancelling your participation in the program.

## SECTION 5

# Outside School Hours Expectations

### General Supervision

Your homestay family will supervise you outside school hours. They may arrange some appropriate leisure activities for you.

You will not be left alone overnight.

You will not be left in the home without the company of family members for long periods of time. It is generally expected that a homestay parent (or other adult) will be at home at least 4 evenings per week.

### Transport

In general the homestay family will assist you with transport to weekend activities, such as shopping or movies with friends. This may be by public transport or private vehicle. You will pay the costs for public transport.

You will not travel alone on public transport after dark.

### Family Outings

The aim of Homestay is for students to experience life as part of an Australian family. Where possible, your family will include you in family outings and special events. It is considered bad manners not to attend events you are invited to.

### Sleepovers

International students may request if they are able to have a sleepover at another person's home. Sleepovers are only permitted if the student is going to another St Aidan's family or an authorised biological family member. Many students may call close family friends, "Aunt or Uncle" however they are not biologically related to the student.

All information must be given to the International Homestay Coordinator via email, no less than three days prior to the date of the sleepover. The school may decline any request submitted after this time.

You must provide all details including name, address, contact number and timeframe of when the sleepover is expected to start and finish. You should introduce your friend or family member to meet your host family at the start of the arrangement

### Social Outings

You may wish to participate in weekend activities with friends, such as movies, shopping, visiting the city, etc. It is expected that you will ask permission from homestay parents to attend such activities. There may be times when your homestay family say no. You must respect their decision. You must always provide your homestay family with details like where you are going, who you will be with, transport arrangements and expected return time. You must inform them immediately if a plan changes.

## **Birthdays & Special Events**

In Australia birthdays are celebrated in many different ways. This may include things like a cake, a party, a special outing, a special meal at home or giving gifts. You may wish to let your family know how you celebrate your birthday at home or other special cultural or religious events that are significant to you.

Significant cultural events that are celebrated in Australia include Christmas (25 December), Easter (the date varies but is usually in April), Australia Day (26 January) and ANZAC Day (25 April).

## **Flights & Airport Transfers**

All students under 14 years of age must be registered as an unaccompanied minor with the airline unless travelling with a guardian. The school strongly recommends that students between 14 and 18 years of age are registered as unaccompanied minors.

A St Aidan's staff member will meet you at Brisbane Airport on your initial arrival into Australia. The Homestay family may accompany the staff member to the airport or the staff member may transport you to the Homestay.

Usually your Homestay family will take you to the airport for your departure.

## **Alcohol & Smoking**

In Australia, it is illegal to consume alcohol or smoke cigarettes if you are under 18. Students under 18 years old must not consume alcohol or smoke cigarettes whilst under a care and welfare arrangement provided by the school. The only exception to this is participation in sanctioned religious service or ceremony.

## SECTION 6

# What Happens First?

You may feel daunted and overwhelmed when your first arrive, especially if this is your first trip to Australia. Adjusting to culture and lifestyle changes may take time.

During the first week, these are some of the things you will need to attend to. Your homestay family will help you with all of these (or at the very minimum discuss with you a firm plan of when it will be attended to).

### **Banking & Money**

If you do not already have one, you will need to open an Australian Bank Account immediately.

In Australia it is not wise or necessary to carry large amounts of cash. Our banks are tightly regulated and access to your money is readily available by ATM withdrawal. We recommend students travel with a bank card that allows them to access cash via ATM withdrawals. If you arrive with a large amount of cash and it is not possible to open a bank account, your cash may be stored temporarily in the school safe.

Most stores in Australia accept Visa or MasterCard for purchases.

In Australian stores prices are marked on or near the item and are non-negotiable.

### **Mobile Phone**

You will need to have a mobile phone and working Australian SIM card. Your Homestay family can help you to arrange this when you arrive. It will usually cost between \$20 and \$40 per month for an Australian SIM card. You must provide homestay families with your mobile phone number.

If bringing a mobile phone from your home country, check that it is unlocked and able to accept an Australian SIM card before you arrive. Some phones cannot accept Australian SIM cards. If you need to purchase an Australian phone handset this may cost around \$100AUD.

### **Transport**

You may be required to use public transport to get to and from school. You are responsible for all costs associated with the use of public transport. Your homestay family will assist you with finding appropriate transport options (usually train and/or bus services).

Most Australian families own a private vehicle. For evening or extra-curricular school related activities the homestay family will provide transport if public transport within daylight hours is not practical or available.

Transport to other activities such as weekend social outings will be negotiated between you and your homestay family.

Homestay families will not charge you extra to transport you in their own vehicle.

## **Clothing**

You must bring all your own casual clothing and footwear. Your homestay family will take you shopping if you require extra items. You will have to pay for any clothing you need to buy.

Summer in Brisbane is December to February. Temperatures usually average between 30 and 35 degrees during the day and 18-20 degrees during the night.

Autumn in Brisbane is March to May. Temperatures usually average between 23 and 30 degrees during the day and 13 to 19 degrees during the night.

Winter in Brisbane is June to August. Temperatures usually average between 18 and 22 degrees during the day and 8 and 10 degrees during the night.

Spring in Brisbane is September to November. Temperatures usually average between 24 and 28 degrees during the day and 12-18 degrees at night.

## SECTION 7

# Finances & Insurance

### Homestay Payments

The payments made to your homestay family cover full board, including all food and accommodation.

No money should change hands directly between the student and the homestay family, unless for such things as additional charges for phone usage or internet data that have been incurred by the family. In these cases, the payment must be approved by the school prior to money changing hands.

If your homestay family requests additional money from you please contact the school immediately.

### Incidentals

There will be incidental costs, such as public transport on weekends, mobile phone and social activities that you will need to allow for.

Generally it would be thought that around A\$50-80 per week would be the minimum needed to meet the average cost of weekly incidentals.

Some social activities, such as an outing to a theme park, are expensive and will require additional money.

If you need to visit the doctor or dentist, you will often be required to make up-front payment and then claim that money back from your travel insurer. It is recommended that you have a minimum of A\$200 in your bank account in case of an emergency.

### Travel Insurance

All Study Experience Students must be covered by a comprehensive travel insurance policy.

If you fall ill or are injured your homestay family will seek appropriate medical treatment for you. This may include calling an ambulance, taking you to a hospital or arranging a medical or dental appointment. Homestay parents may insist you see a doctor if you are unwell.

## **Breakages and Damage**

It is realised that from time to time, things in the home get broken or damaged. The following guidelines apply:

- If the breakage is accidental or innocent, or occurs within the daily wear and tear of normal life (e.g. the vacuum cleaner stops whilst you are vacuuming) the homestay family will cover the cost of replacement or repair. Their insurance policy may cover some costs.
- If the breakage or damage is accidental, but there was mischief, disobedience or carelessness, you will bear the cost of the replacement or repair.
- If the breakage or damage was deliberate, you will bear the cost of the replacement or repair.

Similarly, the following guidelines apply if your personal possessions (e.g. computer) are broken or damaged by a member of the homestay family.

- If the breakage is accidental or innocent, or occurs within the daily wear and tear of normal life (e.g. a computer virus) you will cover the cost of replacement or repair. Your homestay family's insurance policy may cover some costs.
- If the breakage or damage is accidental, but there was mischief, disobedience or carelessness, the homestay family will bear the cost of the replacement or repair.
- If the breakage or damage was deliberate, the homestay family will bear the cost of the replacement or repair.

No money will change hands between you and your homestay family without the written consent of the school.