



Welcome to

Sacred Heart Girls' College, Hamilton



Accommodation Guidelines for Homestays, Designated Caregivers and Parents

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to welcome a Sacred Heart Girls' College international student into your home. You (and they) will find sometimes there may be challenges, but ultimately, we hope the experience will be rewarding and fulfilling and that you are about to meet a life-long extended family member.

This guide has been developed from our years of experience (and those of other schools) as well as Code of Practice requirements. The contents should form the basis of discussions between you and your student. We recommend that, in the first week, you talk with your student about the issues raised here to help avoid conflict arising in the future.

Your main point of contact is our International Director. Please feel free to get in touch if you have any questions, concerns, or feedback.

Sacred Heart Girls' College welcomes students from a wide range of countries. Some may come for one or two terms, others may stay for a year or longer.

New Zealand is seen as a quiet, natural, and safe country with an excellent education system. Some students come to gain qualifications, others to improve their English and experience the "Kiwi" lifestyle.

Most of our students will be living away from home for the first time. For them, and their parents, it is both an exciting and scary time.

It may take a little time and patience to help them settle in and feel confident.

For many students, our way of life is very different to what they are used to. Your help in understanding and supporting them is greatly appreciated.

By becoming a Homestay family, you are providing a young girl with the opportunity to experience our New Zealand lifestyle as a member of your family. Although they pay for their accommodation, meals, and laundry, they are not staying in a hotel. Each student is expected to participate in family life by helping where they can and joining in family activities.

As a host family, you are standing in for her parents while she is in your care.

Collette Tuioti
Director of International Students

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International Students Accommodation Guidelines

Section A: Definitions (as per the Code of Practice)

What is a Residential Caregiver (Homestay)?

“Homestay” means accommodation provided to an international student in the residence of a family or household where no more than four international students are accommodated.

What is a Designated Care Giver (DCG)?

“DCG” is a relative or close family friend designated in writing by the parents of an international student as the caregiver and accommodation provider for that student, but does not include an establishment owner, manager, or employee.

What is a Parent?

“Parent” means the father or mother of an international student, and includes court appointed guardians.

Section B: Homestay Guidelines

1. Student Arrival

When we place a student with you, we will advise you of her course start date, duration, and any other details available to us. At the airport, students will be met by our contracted shuttle service or their agent. We will provide you with the time and place to meet your new family member when they arrive in Hamilton.

2. Bedroom

Students need to have their own bedroom and their own bed with all linen provided. This is their sanctuary when they need to be alone, so please make sure your children do not intrude. Each room needs a chest of drawers and a wardrobe, a large desk with a chair for homework and lighting suitable for study.

A heater is required as most overseas visitors find our houses cold and under-heated. Please be clear when discussing when and how to turn off heaters or heat pumps. Teenagers of all cultures struggle to keep their rooms clean and tidy so remember to remind them to clean up if needed!

3. Meals

For most students, New Zealand food can be very different, especially what we eat for breakfast and lunch. Many students miss the food from home; however, you are not expected to cater to their preferences for every meal. Please try to provide healthy food options.

- Monday to Friday – please provide breakfast, a cut lunch (choice of fillings), after school snacks and an evening meal. Be clear with “house” rules e.g., fruit consumption. Discuss which foods they like/dislike.
- Saturday and Sunday – please provide breakfast, lunch, an evening meal, and snacks as per normal family arrangements.
- Do not ‘hide’ food, or reserve food for your family. This has been a common complaint from other schools with international students and it is very upsetting for the student.

- Take your student with you to the supermarket and other outlets, i.e., Asian supermarkets, so they can see the range of items on offer.
- Please provide your student with a shelf or space to store some of their own food.
- If you take your student out for lunch or dinner (McDonalds etc.) it should be treated as a meal at home and paid for by you. If your student chooses to go out for lunch or dinner with their own friends, it is the student who pays.
- Teenagers often have “hollow legs” and can eat quite large amounts. Weetbix, rice and wholemeal bread may help to fill the gaps.

4. Homestay Payments

- Your homestay payments will be paid (for seven nights) for one student.
- The homestay payments will be paid into your nominated account each fortnight, one week in advance and one week in arrears.
- If your student is absent for more than five nights, your homestay payment will be reduced to \$10 per night, as long as two weeks’ notice has been given by the student to you (e.g. if your student is away for ten nights, five nights will be paid at the full rate and five nights at \$10 per night).
- If you are going to be away, please inform the school and do give sufficient notice so a respite home can be found for your student.
- No student is to be left unsupervised overnight at any stage, regardless of their age. Note this is a legal requirement under The Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021. All Code requirements are applied to all our students regardless of age.

5. Homestay Changes

We take great care in placing a student with a homestay family and try to ensure we match the student with a suitable household in terms of lifestyle, interests etc. Even though we place the student with the intention of them staying with you for their time at the school, there is no guarantee that this will happen.

Sometimes students ask to be moved and sometimes homestay family circumstances change. We try to resolve any issues before a change is made.

Reasons for a change in homestay may include:

- early return to home country
- change in homestay circumstances
- unacceptable behaviour to homestay or serious breach of school rules
- unacceptable behaviour from homestay towards student
- a mismatch of student and homestay
- request from natural parents for student to live with a family member or guardian.

Two weeks' notice by either party or a one week payment in lieu of notice is required.

Sacred Heart Girls' College reserves the right to move a student without prior notice if necessary. Should this happen to you, please do not feel offended. This does not occur very often, but if it does, we make every effort to place another student with your family if suitable.

No student is to move without the prior consent of the Director of International Students. The student's visa may be withdrawn if a student moves without notice.

6. Transport

Students new to New Zealand often find our buses and timetables confusing.

To help your student settle in, please explain the route to school with them before school starts. Ideally, either drive or teach your student how to catch the bus to/from your home and back again. We provide each student with a Bee Card to lower the cost – see <https://www.busit.co.nz/about-us/bee/> for more information. Students are responsible for paying all transport costs unless a free school bus is provided in your area.

Your student may have tuition, sport, or other activities after school and in the weekends. Please ensure arrangements have been made for their safe transport home, as you would for your other family members.

Students may only be driven by the homestay family or a person with a full New Zealand licence who has been approved by the homestay family, or school staff. An approved driver must have a full New Zealand licence, be known to the homestay family and be reliable.

Host parents must check licences of drivers. No overseas licences are acceptable.

If you are not comfortable with either the driver or the car PLEASE DO NOT allow your student to drive with them.

7. Uniform

Our students must wear the approved school uniform. Please help them to purchase their uniform – details are on the school website. We have a few uniform items at school if your student is here for a short stay.

Alternatively, short stay students may wear their own school uniform. We will advise you if this is the case.

8. Holidays

Students may travel back to their home countries if they provide written permission from their legal parents and their agents prior to travelling. They must not have any time off school for this travel. Long term students often return home for the Christmas holidays.

International Students are not allowed to travel independently (i.e., without approved parental supervision) while they are studying at Sacred Heart Girls' College. International students are encouraged to travel in holiday time with their host family, with school-organised groups, and on trips and activities organised by their agents.

The International Director MUST approve all travel arrangements prior to travel. Failure to do so could result in the student's visa being revoked. A written permission form, available from the International Office must be completed at least two weeks before departure.

9. Family Outings and Trips

While your student is living with you, they are a part of your family and should be encouraged to participate in family outings, events and visits. Interaction with the family and your friends helps both their language and social skills.

If you invite a student to join in a family outing, it is usual, that, as part of the family, you will pay their expenses. If this is not the case, please ensure the student understands and agrees to pay their share.

If you are planning a trip or holiday outside of Hamilton it is especially important that the student understands, and agrees to who is paying for what. Some students may not be able to afford the extra expense of holiday accommodation and transport.

If you wish to arrange a family holiday and your student is unable to come with you please contact the International Office to arrange alternative accommodation while you are away.

A letter of permission from the student's parents must also be provided if the student intends to participate in any adventurous or potentially dangerous activity e.g. skydiving.

10. Smoking, Drinking and Drugs

Make your family views on smoking very clear to your student on the first day at your home. Smoking under the age of 18 years is illegal in New Zealand, but many students do smoke in their home country. No smoking in school uniform, ever!

Drinking is not allowed for students under 18 years. It is illegal for alcohol to be sold or supplied to anyone under 18 years. If a student is buying or consuming illegal substances please contact the International Director immediately.

11. Mobile Phones

Most students will purchase a New Zealand SIM card when they arrive. This makes it easier for them to stay in touch with you and their parents. Encourage them to use their mobile phone for calls to their parents.

Some students may have an international calling card which is loaded with credit for international calls.

All overseas telephone calls should be made from the student's mobile phone, collect, or with a pre-paid card. (Host families and Sacred Heart Girls' College accept no responsibility for any communication costs.)

Please discuss your expectations around the duration and times when calls are made, e.g., 10-20 minutes and no calls after 9.30 pm. Please remember, however, the different time zones of their home countries.

12. Internet Use

Please check that your student is not spending long periods of time on websites in their first language as this is a hindrance to developing their English language skills. They should also be discouraged from staying up late at night.

Students should not visit any offensive websites. If you are concerned, please contact the International Director immediately.

Internet facilities are available at Sacred Heart Girls' College in the library for all students to use during interval and lunchtime.

13. Emergencies

In case of emergency, use your common sense and determine whether a 111 call, or if a trip to hospital or a medical centre is needed. You MUST use the school's 24-hour contact number. Please DO NOT contact the home family. This has to be done through approved channels via the school.

International students should be taken to the nearest hospital or emergency clinic in an emergency.

24 Hour Emergency Contact

Director of International Students

MOBILE 021 0200 0710

International students should be taken to the host family's own doctor or medical centre in cases of illness.

International students must have appropriate and current medical and travel insurance while studying in New Zealand. Students needing medical assistance need to pay for their own treatment at the time, retain all receipts and details of the care, and claim the expenses through the International Office. If in hospital they should contact the International Director immediately as the costs can be paid by the insurance company direct to the hospital.

Most international students are not entitled to publicly funded health services while in New Zealand. Full details on entitlements to publicly funded health services are available through the Ministry of Health, and can be viewed on their website at www.moh.govt.nz

The Accident Compensation Corporation provides accident insurance for all New Zealand citizens, residents and temporary visitors to New Zealand, but students may still be liable for all other medical and related costs. Further information can be viewed on the ACC website at www.acc.co.nz

Ask your student to show you her insurance so you know which company they are with. Most will use Unicare. International students are advised to carry their insurance details with them.

14. Absence From School

Sacred Heart Girls' College must be advised of your student's absence from school and the reason why, via:

- phone: 856 7874 option 1
- email: absences@shgcham.school.nz

15. Courtesy and Supervision

Students must discuss with a host parent in advance whether they will or will not be home for a meal. They must explain where they are going (provide an address) and what time they will be home and leave a contact number if possible (in case of urgent messages). The student's cell phone contact only is not good enough.

The host family must make suitable arrangements for the student if the family will be away from home for a meal.

No student is allowed to stay away from the host family home overnight without the consent of the host family and informing the International Office.

16. Electrical Appliances

New Zealand electricity is 240 volts so students may need to use transformers on any electrical appliances they bring here. Please check this carefully BEFORE you plug anything in.

17. Household Tasks

As a member of the family, students should assist with some basic household tasks if asked to do so. If your children are expected to help around the house, your student should also be involved in some light household chores.

Laundry is usually done by the host family. Some students prefer to do their own but please ensure that your student knows how to use the washing machine and dryer, and/or where to hang their washing. Some students do not like their washing hung outside, "in public". Please respect their wishes.

18. Water

From the beginning, please show your student how the shower works, the surfaces that you leave dry, and remind them to spend only five to eight minutes for their daily shower. Also, please explain how to leave the bathroom/toilet after use.

Students should be aware not to place too much toilet paper or any objects in the toilet as it may become blocked. It may be wise to place a small bin next to the toilet for any sanitary items. Some cultures place all toilet paper and objects in a basket so you will need to explain carefully what happens in New Zealand.

19. Cultural Differences

Discuss with your student how your family members greet and address each other, say good night, good morning, what happens when each person comes home, or leaves the house etc.

The biggest difference encountered is the “openness” of New Zealand society when compared to that of Asia. Also, most students from Asia are uncomfortable with physical contact.

Students can often misinterpret actions which for us would be a normal display of affection. Girls can also feel uneasy if left alone in the house with male family members. To avoid any possible problems or misunderstanding, please make sure our students have a female companion if the host mother is away overnight.

Some Asian fathers are absent from home more often than not so there may be no familiarity with how to interact as father/daughter and even the most natural (for us) signs of affection, can cause embarrassment.

In contrast, South American students are horrified at our lack of physical contact. They can be very demonstrative and find us very cold indeed. They would expect to be greeted by a kiss. Also, they tend not to understand our early bedtimes!

Please remember most problems occur through cultural differences and not bad behaviour, so communication can go a long way to solving many of the potential problems. This and sensitivity to your student’s personality will help you bridge those culture barriers to form a strong family relationship.

Treat the student as you would want your own son or daughter to be treated overseas and you will get it right 99% of the time.

20. Religion/Church Attendance

Students come from many cultures and religions and this should be respected. It is often very difficult and embarrassing for students to say “No” when pressed to attend services which are not part of their beliefs.

21. Curfews

Students under 16 years of age should not be going to parties unless you are very sure of the arrangements. Please check with the International Director in all cases.

Students under the age of 16 are not allowed out unless accompanied by their host family or someone approved by host family. Please always check who is the “responsible adult” and that they are, in fact, aware of that responsibility (and that they are aware of the outing). You may need to drop off and pick up your student if necessary.

Students between the ages of 16 and 17 may want to go out. This needs to be specifically arranged beforehand, with details checked.

Students aged 18 years or older still need to have approval of their caregiver as to where they are going, with whom, how they will get home, and by when.

We recommend that all students are not out later than 8.00 pm on school evenings.

22. Other

A student attending Sacred Heart Girls’ College must abide by the school’s standards and expectations, i.e., the school rules. Please read the fortnightly school newsletter so you are aware of school events and notices.

Our international students are in New Zealand for different reasons – from completing their education to having an exciting overseas experience, to improving their English. Check your student’s goals when they arrive. A short-term student has different expectations than that of a long-term student.

Students should be able to have fun while still attempting homework, assignments and exams. Please encourage regular and steady homework habits and don’t be afraid to ask what they are doing at school or for homework etc.

Host Families are not expected to:

- pay for toll or mobile phone calls
- regularly cook special food
- insure the student’s goods or pay for property the student damages or loses
- offer accommodation to visiting friends or relatives
- comply with unreasonable requests.

23. Screen Time

We think one or two hours’ maximum use at a time for any shared computers or devices is reasonable. It is not appropriate for students to be on any device for hours at a time. Excessive screen time can be a real problem, impacting negatively on school and family life.

Please discuss your expectations for “lights out” and when devices are to be off e.g. 10.00 pm on school days. If there are any concerns, please discuss them with the International Director.

24. Consequences of Inappropriate Actions

A student may be asked to return home in serious situations. Some examples are:

- illegal activities (drugs, shoplifting, theft)
- violence and aggression
- habitual truancy
- bullying
- emotional imbalance
- dishonesty/untrustworthiness
- inability/unwillingness to comply with school and homestay rules
- inappropriate and unsafe social behaviour.

25. Students Are Responsible For

- any luxury cosmetic items, personal toiletries
- personal pocket money and personal expenses
- bus fares
- exam fees
- holiday costs
- medical/dental expenses
- telephone accounts
- uniforms
- losses and theft of student property (a police report may be necessary for insurance).

Parents and students have signed a contract agreeing to abide by all of the rules and policies.

Section C: Designated Caregiver (DCG) Guidelines

The student's parents have placed their daughter in your care. Sacred Heart Girls' College MUST be informed prior to any change to this arrangement.

The parents take full responsibility and accept the decisions made by you about the day-to-day requirements of their daughter and understand that Sacred Heart Girls' College will make every endeavour to provide care and welfare of their child whilst studying at the school.

Should there be a concern about the welfare of your student, the school will discuss the concern with you and parents of the student. The school may also refer the matter to the New Zealand Police or any other appropriate welfare or outside agencies. If necessary the school may relocate the student to an approved homestay (with permission of the parents) if any issues cannot be resolved.

An International Office staff member will visit your home on or prior to enrolment in order to meet with you and establish a communication arrangement with you. The school will ensure that your selected accommodation is satisfactory. A police check will also occur. The school will interview your student at least once a term to monitor her on-going well-being. If at any time the school feels the student is unsafe the school has the right to move the student to a new homestay and inform her parents and agent.

Section D: Parent Guidelines

Students living with parents will still be monitored by the school. The home of a parent may be visited to verify the living situation.

At no time can a parent leave the student unsupervised overnight or for any length of time without first informing the school and seeking approval for a temporary adult caregiver to take their place. This will probably be a designated caregiver that needs to be approved.

If students are living with a parent, then the parent has full responsibility for the pastoral care of the student outside tuition hours, and may be called up to the school at short notice on school matters.

If a parent leaves a student unsupervised in New Zealand that student may lose their place at the school and New Zealand Immigration will be informed. Parents must follow all the policies of the school at all times.

Section E: Homesickness

Moving to a new country to live can be a very exciting time and also a very scary time. There is a lot to learn and adjust to, everything is new and different – the culture, food, weather, language and people.

Some students settle in quickly while others take a bit longer to adapt and can experience homesickness and culture shock. Once students settle into their new life in New Zealand, they can sometimes experience a “reverse culture shock” when they return home.

Contact with their home family is important but be aware that too much can sometimes prolong the settling in period.

Stage 1 – Leaving Home

- nervous
- excited
- happy
- sad
- full of hope
- busy with preparation



Stage 2 – Arriving in New Zealand

- tired
- confused
- still happy
- adventurous
- everything is new and different



Stage 3 – Culture Shock

- lonely
- new and different food
- new language
- difficult to study
- frightened
- hard to make friends/shy
- tired from speaking English all the time
- nothing seems right



Stage 4 – What Have I Done?

- extremely homesick – missing friends and family
- miserable
- was I right to come to New Zealand?
- does anybody like me?
- hopelessness
- everything is terrible
- wants to sleep all the time



Stage 5 – Settling In

- enjoying study
- making friends
- beginning to adapt to new culture
- things are not so bad
- getting involved in school activities
- enjoying different food and new things
- understanding English
- homestay feels like home



Stage 6 – New Zealand Is Great!

- feeling confident, successful and happy
- a definite purpose in New Zealand
- looking forward to new experiences



You can help your student by:

- being patient and understanding
- encouraging them to join clubs and activities at school
- involving them in family activities
- reminding them that their homesickness will pass
- using a bi-lingual dictionary (or Google!) if they are stuck trying to explain something
- allowing them some quiet time to be on their own.

Section F: Common Questions/Concerns

Hosting a student from another country is a wonderful opportunity to experience a different culture. Awareness of some cultural differences can help when problems or frustrations occur.

Our student says they don't have to go to school every day.	Attendance is a condition of their enrolment and student visa. The same rules apply as for New Zealand students. If your student is ill, please advise the student office.
Our student stays up very late at night and then oversleeps in the morning.	This is common with many overseas students who are used to studying or socialising until late at night. Remind them of the importance of being at school on time and being quiet late in the evening so the rest of the family can sleep.
Our student doesn't help in the house.	A lot of families overseas have home help. Your student may not be used to doing chores. Explain that it is usual in New Zealand for everyone to help out. Show them what you need them to do.
Our student has been here for a while now and the improvement in their English seems to have stalled.	There is often a big improvement in language when the student first arrives, then progress can stall for a while. This is usual when learning a new language and another improvement will follow. You can help by encouraging reading, conversation, and discussing the meanings of different words as a family. You may find it helpful to turn on the "Subtitles" feature if your TV has that facility.
Our student doesn't do any study and says they don't have any homework.	ALL International students have homework or revision work to complete. Even if they are not doing NCEA, they should still be completing homework, assignments and assessment work, or reading and practicing their English.
Our student seems uncomfortable when my husband is around. He hasn't done anything to upset them.	In some countries, fathers are often absent from much of family life. Your student may not be used to having a male in the house for meals etc. This should get better with time.
I can't tell if our student is happy or sad. They don't show any emotion at all.	It is usual in some cultures to not display emotions. Your student may become more demonstrative once they get to know you better.

<p>Our new student's English is not very good – we were told it was.</p>	<p>Your new family member is probably feeling tired and overwhelmed by all the changes. Once she settles in and feels more comfortable, her English will improve. Also, it can take time to get used to our Kiwi accents, the speed with which we speak, and to have the confidence to engage in conversations.</p>
<p>Our student spends all their time in their bedroom and not with the family.</p>	<p>This is a common problem with new students. When they first arrive, dealing with all the changes and having to speak English all day can be very tiring. Homesickness can also be an issue. Once the student settles in, they may feel more comfortable spending time with you.</p>
<p>Our student has been here for a while and seemed to be ok but now they are homesick.</p>	<p>There are different stages of settling into a new life and they may have been caught up in the initial excitement of being in a new environment. Let them know it is normal to feel homesick and encourage them to keep busy and involved. This stage will pass.</p>
<p>Our student doesn't do anything at the weekends and seems bored.</p>	<p>A lot of students are used to having longer days at school, lots of study and extra-curricular lessons in their home country to occupy their time. The idea of "free-time" can be a new concept for many. Encourage her to join in groups or try new sports. Our students are given information at school about various sports and activities they can take part in.</p>
<p>Our student never answers a request (such as what they would like for lunch) with a definite "Yes" or "No" even when I can tell they have a preference. Our student has been throwing away/hiding food; we found out it was because they didn't like it. Why didn't they just tell us?</p>	<p>A lot of students will find it difficult to tell you their preferences as they don't want to seem rude; especially if they are declining something. Let them know it is ok to tell you.</p>
<p>Our student told the international staff that they are cold/hungry but they haven't said anything to me about it.</p>	<p>Often students will tell someone else about a small problem as they don't want to cause embarrassment or upset in their homestay. Encourage them to talk to you openly about any problem they have.</p>
<p>Our student won't look me in the eye. It is a bit annoying.</p>	<p>In some cultures, making eye contact with adults is impolite. They may be showing you respect. Let them know it is okay in New Zealand.</p>
<p>Our student treats the homestay father politely but treats me and my daughter as if we are servants.</p>	<p>A lot of cultures give a higher status to males. Your student is acting according to what is normal in their culture and may not be aware that it is not acceptable in New Zealand. Explain to them that in New Zealand, everyone is treated equally.</p>
<p>Sometimes our student appears rude and speaks too informally with older adults. We have noticed a few swear words being used as well.</p>	<p>It can be difficult to understand the different levels of formality in any language when you haven't grown up speaking it. Students will repeat phrases they hear around them and will not always know what it is appropriate in different contexts. While this can create some amusing situations, it is best to let your student know which words or terms are more appropriate in different circumstances. These "teachable moments" can result in some very interesting discussions!</p>
<p>Our student doesn't tell us the truth.</p>	<p>While you may experience a few small "cover ups" when the student wants to avoid hurting your feelings or appear rude, not telling the truth is a frustrating issue. Explain the importance of honesty in building trust, respect, and a good relationship.</p>

Most problems can be solved by an explanation of the issue. If you have any concerns or have tried to sort things out but if the situation is still a problem, please contact the International Director. ■