



YARRA VALLEY GRAMMAR

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Policy Name	International Students Homestay Policy
Constructed /Reviewed by	Executive/Board
Review	Last Review: March 2023 Next Review: March 2025

Statement of Context

International students without an accompanying parent or legal guardian can only be accepted into Yarra Valley Grammar (School) once they have turned 13 years of age. All international students who are in Australia on the authority of a CAAW letter issued by the School must reside in Homestay Accommodation approved by the School for the duration of the study period at Yarra Valley Grammar.

The School is committed to ensuring that international students who attend the School under a CAAW letter:

- are provided with Homestay Accommodation of high quality which provides a safe, comfortable and caring environment for Homestay Students.
- have appropriate accommodation, support and welfare arrangements in place at all times.

It is important that international students try to become a part of their Host's family by communicating and mixing with the family as they would in their own home. The School will discuss with the Homestay Student on an ongoing basis any issues they may have with their Host. The School's Hosts are closely monitored by the School with regular contact throughout the year with the Hosts and feedback from the Homestay Students.

Scope

This Policy applies to all Hosts, School staff, Homestay visitors or residents, Homestay Students, employees and volunteers.

Definitions

CAAW means Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare.

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eCOE means electronic Confirmation of Enrolment.

ESOS Act means the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (Cth).

Evidence Guide means the VRQA Evidence Guide to the Guidelines for the Enrolment of Overseas Students Aged Under 18.

Evidence Portfolio means the documentation all Victorian schools, seeking re-approval of courses, are required to submit for assessment to confirm the VRQA's assessment of the school's likelihood of meeting the standards for approval.

Homestay Accommodation means the accommodation approved by the School for the international student to stay in while studying at the School as their parents/legal guardians are not in Australia.

Homestay Student means an overseas student who is residing in Homestay Accommodation.

Host means a person who is approved by the School to provide Homestay Accommodation pursuant to a Homestay Deed between the Host and the School.

International Student means a person (whether within or outside Australia) who holds a student visa as defined by the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (**ESOS Act**), but does not include students of a kind prescribed in the ESOS Regulations. Where the student is under 18 years of age and the student is required to exercise rights or enter obligations as a legal person, this term may refer to the student's parents or legal guardian.

Local Support Person means the person identified as supporting the Homestay Student.

National Code means the *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018*.

VRQA means the Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority.

VRQA Requirements include the VRQA Guidelines, VRQA Evidence Guide and VRQA Evidence Portfolio.

VRQA Guidelines means the Victorian Registration & Qualifications Authority Guidelines for the Enrolment of Overseas Students Aged Under 18.

WWCC means Working with Children Check issued in accordance with the *Worker Screening Act 2020* (Vic).

Aim

This Policy has been designed to meet the requirements of the National Code and VRQA Requirements.

The School has an established database of approved Hosts, within the local community, who meet the School's homestay requirements. All Hosts have been previously interviewed and visited to establish suitability and offerings for international students. Notwithstanding this, the School will

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undertake new assessments prior to the placement of any international student with a Host, in accordance with the provisions of this Policy.

As the School signs CAAW letter accepting the responsibility for approving the accommodation, support and general welfare arrangements for a student who is under the age of 18, the School does not delegate, outsource or contract out this responsibility to another party.

Policy Details

1. Homestay Procedures

1.1. Shortlist of Prospective Hosts and Due Dilligence undertaken by the School

Prospective homestay families should contact school to complete the expression of interest form to host an overseas student of the School. An email has been provided on the website for prospective families to contact the School.

The School conducts its own screening and verification assessment of Prospective Hosts and of the appropriateness of the accommodation arrangements for the international student, prior to accepting a Prospective Host as a Host for the School and the placement of an international student with a Host. This may include an initial assessment of the appropriateness of the accommodation along with collecting any necessary forms and documentation, such as working with children checks. An initial assessment of prospective homestay family may include collecting information regarding the family's commitment to School policies, proximity to the School and appropriateness of the accommodation arrangements for the student. All subsequent verification of adults at the Host's residence will be undertaken by the School.

The due diligence undertaken by the School is part of the School's screening process regardless of the recommendation. The School has the complete responsibility for the overseas student's accommodation, welfare or support.

1.2. Screening, Approval and Ongoing monitoring of accommodation, support and welfare arrangements

The School undertakes the screening and assessment process for the prospective homestay families. The School always verifies the suitability of the homestay accommodation in accordance with student's age and needs. This is usually carried out by the Director of Marketing and Admissions, International Student Coordinator, or their delegates. The School checks, approves and monitors all homestays (whether family referred or school sourced) to verify that the student's accommodation is safe and appropriate to the student's age and needs at least every six months. The screening process may include, but is not limited to:

- meeting with homestay parents, family members and any other individuals who regularly reside in the accommodation to know the character and background of all persons who will be in frequent contact with the homestay student.
- conducting an initial inspection of the accommodation to assess its suitability for the student's age and needs unless the homestay has been verified by a site visit in relation to

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another student in the previous three months in which case an inspection may not be carried out.

- carrying out due diligence investigations on the homestay family, such as verifying Working with Children Checks received from all persons 18 years or over residing or frequenting the home and check the validity of the documents via Working with Children Check website, and ensuring that it has all the required documents on file for the host family; and
- if deemed necessary by the International Student Coordinator, obtain reference contact details of personal and professional referees of any persons over 18 years who reside or frequent the home.

Once the School has finalised the screening process, the School will notify prospective families of its decision. The decision is at the discretion of the School and is final.

The School is fully responsible for the approval and ongoing monitoring of all Hosts. The School will conduct initial screening and verification of the accommodation prior to approval of any Prospective Host for placement of an international student. This includes due diligence with inspection of accommodation and meeting with Prospective Hosts prior and post placement. The inspections are carried out by the School prior to the placement and at least every six months thereafter. At each visit, the staff from the school will complete a Home Stay Site Checklist and Risk Assessment and will advise the Principal if there are any material changes to the risk assessment of the Homestay Accommodation.

The School ensures that it has all the required documents on file for the Host and other persons residing with the Host. The School always verifies the suitability of the Prospective Hosts' accommodation in accordance with international student's age and needs. All verification and checks of the homestay families and accommodation will be undertaken by the School.

The School also recommends the appointment of a Local Support Person who liaises closely with the School. The appointment of the Local Support Person does not mitigate the CAAW responsibilities of the School and ensures that there is a bi-lingual support person who is independent of School and can facilitate the communication process between the School and the Homestay Student's parents.

The Local Support Person will not be the sole method of communication between the Host, School, Homestay Student and the Homestay Student's parents. Their role will be limited to providing translation services as required, and liaising with the Homestay Student, as required by the School.

When considering whether a Host and Homestay Accommodation is appropriate, the International Students Coordinator in coordination with the Director of Marketing and Admissions will undertake the following process:

- meet the proposed Host, others who reside at the Homestay Accommodation and any regular visitors to know and understand the character and background of all persons who will be in frequent contact with the Homestay Student;
- visit the home and conduct a Home Stay Site Checklist and Risk Assessment;

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- provide to the Host:
 - Homestay Risk Management Strategy;
 - Child Protection Policy;
 - Child Safety Code of Conduct; and
 - any other relevant policies;
- receive approved WWCC from all persons 18 years or over (including other students) residing or frequenting the Homestay Accommodation and check the validity of the documents via the WWCC website; and
- obtain reference contact details of personal and professional referees of any persons over 18 years who reside or frequent the home as required.

The School will maintain up-to-date records of the Homestay contact details, including the contact details of the Homestay Student's parent(s), legal guardian or any adult responsible for the Homestay Student's welfare in PRISMS.

1.3. Allocation of Hosts and Transition Process

After following its due diligence process, the School will approve the most suitable Host for each Homestay Student by matching the Homestay Accommodation to the individual needs of the Homestay Student and their family, considering factors such as age, interests and study requirements and distance from the School. All members of a Host's family over the age of 18 must have a Working with Children Check. The Hosts are thoroughly briefed before hosting a Homestay Student on the School's policies and understanding of cultural, linguistic and religious differences.

The School will not approve Homestay Accommodation if the maximum number of Homestay Students in their Homestay Accommodation exceeds three (3) Homestay Students either under 18 years or over.

A Homestay Student's Host and Local Support Person cannot be the same person. Prior to the placement of the student within the homestay accommodation, the School will communicate with the homestay family and the designated caregiver to ensure arrangements are in place for the student to arrive in the homestay accommodation safely. Prior to the commencement of a homestay appointment, the School will provide the homestay host with the emergency contact details of the School (which is a 24 hour emergency number) and the overseas student's parents details.

Regular communication between the Host, the Homestay Student and the School will take place on an ongoing basis and as required:

- If at any time issues arise, the School would attempt to resolve the issues through its complaint resolution procedures.
- A decision as to the continuation of the homestay arrangements will be made after the investigation is carried out by the School, except in urgent circumstances where the welfare of the Homestay Student requires immediate attention or removal from the Host.
- If after investigation and review of the arrangements, the Host is deemed unsuitable, the Homestay Student shall be moved to another Host.

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- If the Homestay Student is being moved because the Host has been assessed as inappropriate as a Host, the Host will be removed permanently from the School's database of Hosts.

1.4. Training

The School provides training for Hosts, the International Students Coordinator and other support staff involved in the international student program to ensure they have adequate knowledge of:

- the Child Safe Standards;
- the School's processes for reporting suspected child abuse, including relevant contact numbers;
- the School's policies and procedures for managing emergency and critical incidents, and for verifying the Homestay Student's accommodation is appropriate to their age and needs; and
- the ESOS Act, the National Code and the VRQA Requirements.

The School educates and encourages international student to speak up about suspected child abuse. Such training considers culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds of international students and other potential difficulties in Homestay Students having such conversations.

1.5. Homestay cost and payment arrangements

The cost of Homestay Accommodation is determined and communicated to parents before the international student enters the Homestay Accommodation. Every effort is made to ensure that Homestay Accommodation payment methods avoid the Homestay Student being involved in the financial transaction unless the Homestay Student is over 18 years of age. Should the Host have concerns about payments, the host must not involve the Homestay Student directly in any discussion or dispute.

2. Host Obligations

Hosts must follow their obligations outlined in the Homestay Deed document, including:

- All Hosts must comply with the [National Code](#).
- All members living at the Host's family residence over 18 years of age must have a current WWCC.
- It is the Host's responsibility to ensure the home is safe if the Homestay Student is home alone. An assessment of this will form part of the School's inspection.
- The Homestay Student should have internal access to the home at all times, meaning they must be given a key, security code or other means of entry in case the Host is not present at any time.
- The Homestay Student should be able to contact the Host at any time. They must also leave emergency contact numbers, including 000 for emergency calls by the Homestay Student.
- Students of the opposite sex cannot reside in the Homestay Accommodation.
- Homestay Students cannot change arrangements without consultation and agreement by the School.

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- Hosts are expected to follow all policies and procedures of the School subject to change.
- Hosts must cooperate with the School to ensure that the Homestay Students return to their home country as per School's end of year arrangements.
- All Hosts are expected to be present during term times and must inform the School of any plans of holidays during term breaks with a notice period of at least 6 weeks so that the Homestay Students can be moved temporarily to other approved Hosts during that period, if necessary.
- Hosts are not allowed to leave Homestay Students under the supervision of relatives or friends while travelling. The [Term dates](#) for the School can be accessed on the School's website.
- Host families wishing to take Homestay Students on holidays must seek prior written permission from the School. The School does not allow the Homestay Student to sleep at another location overnight or go on a holiday without obtaining the prior written permission of the School.
- Hosts must agree to regular visits, at least every 6 months from any school staff member.
- Hosts must assist and report any student absences by contacting the School offices in the morning. The Senior School office (Years 10-12) can be contacted on 9262 7767 and Middle School (Years 7-9) on 9262 7761.
- Hosts must ensure that Homestay Students follow School rules, policies and procedures at all times and use airport transfers services as authorised by the School.

The Host must immediately notify the School of any incident or allegation of child abuse including:

- any act committed against, with or in the presence of a child involving
 - a sexual offence; or
 - an offence under section 49B (2) of the *Crimes Act 1958* (grooming); and
- the infliction, on a child, of
 - physical violence; or
 - serious emotional or psychological harm; and
- serious neglect of a child.

A School employee cannot be a Host, unless exceptional circumstances apply and the Principal has provided written approval of the appointment. Notwithstanding this clause, an employee may be authorised as a temporary Host in exceptional circumstances, provided that the employee receives no financial gain.

3. Student Obligations

The Homestay Student is expected to follow the guidelines and rules as per the Student Homestay Guidelines document:

- The initial length of time of the homestay is six weeks. If no issues arise during this period or

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at any other time, including, without limitation, following the School's six-monthly inspection, the homestay will continue until the Homestay student leaves the School or there is a need to change the Host as identified and acknowledged by the School.

- When the Homestay Student arrives, the Host will outline the expectations that come with being a member of their family. It is important that Homestay Students ask questions they may have if they do not understand what is outlined to them. The School expects that the Homestay Student will be treated fairly and in a similar manner to an Australian teenager.
- If the Homestay Student wishes to return home for holidays, a holiday form and airport transfers form must be completed, outlining flight details. The Homestay Student will be charged a fee to hold their homestay room at the Host's house for that time period.
- If the Homestay Student wishes to leave the Host arranged for them and move to another one, the Homestay Student must notify the School and give reasons as to why this change needs to take place. The School will assist the Homestay Student in resolving any issue they may have with the Host. In such scenarios, the School will:
 - contact the Host to discuss the issue.
 - call a meeting with the International Student Coordinator, homestay student and designated caregiver to discuss the issue further, focusing on what has facilitated the issue and strategies to resolve the issue.
 - document and implement strategies towards resolution; and
 - monitor the situation to ensure that the homestay student feels safe and comfortable in their accommodation.
- If the issue is not able to be resolved, then the homestay student will meet with the Director of Marketing and Admissions and the International Student Co-ordinator to consider how to remedy the situation. This may include:
 - conducting a site visit; or
 - changing the student's homestay

4. Homestay Expectations – Cancellation of Study

Where the Homestay Student's enrolment is terminated, suspended or cancelled, a representative from the School will continue to check welfare and accommodation arrangements until:

- The Homestay Student has a new provider which takes on approval of welfare and accommodation arrangements.
- The Homestay Student leaves the country.
- Other arrangements, suitable to Department of Home Affairs, have been made.
- The School reports it can no longer approve the arrangements.

The School will make regular phone calls and conduct visits to the Host to ensure that the whereabouts of the Homestay Student is always known.

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5. Critical Incidents, After Hours Support and School Contacts

Hosts must report all critical incidents or incidents requiring School's attention on a priority basis to the School as per the details provided in the Overseas Student Emergency Assistance card.

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