



Berkeley Guardians

Home from Home

Parent Handbook



BERKELEY GUARDIANS' ADDRESS

Berkeley Guardians, 1 Berkeley Square,
Clifton, Bristol BS8 1HL

Office:

support@berkeleyguardians.com

**During the hours of 9 - 5 p.m. please call the office number above
or the mobile numbers below:**

Karen Pickles: (+44) - Designated Safeguarding Lead

Karen@berkeleyguardians.com

Jo Clark: (+44) - Deputy Safeguarding Lead

Jo@berkeleyguardians.com

From 1700 - 0900 HOURS

**please use the Emergency Number for any issue that cannot wait
until office hours**

Emergency Phone:

Contact for the Bristol Safeguarding Board:

01179036444

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

We are delighted that you have chosen Berkeley Guardians to care for your child and do hope that this will be the start of a very happy and professional relationship. We will do all we can to support, care for and nurture your child throughout their time in the UK, whilst under our care and will work to reassure you, as parents, by keeping in regular contact via email or phone.



Jo Clark - Director

Jo Clark has over 12 years of dedicated experience working and supporting international young people from countries all over the world. She has extensive experience in profile matching the needs and aspirations of young people to high quality work experience and internship programs. She has managed high quality host family accommodation to ensure a safe and nurturing environment for young people to feel comfortable and secure. You can be confident in the knowledge that through Jo's vast experience your child will have the best support and opportunity to enable them to feel inclusive and to thrive.



Karen Pickles - Director

Karen Pickles has been a Senior Housemistress in a large boarding school in Bristol for many years and has cared for and nurtured many international boarders of all ages and understands the need for strong communication between the guardian and the child whilst at school. Having studied for a post graduate qualification in boarding management and welfare/pastoral care in education settings, she has the education background to support and care for your child whilst at school. Visiting the school, whether to meet a housemaster or attend a parents' evening is also something that Karen is very used to and this gives reassurance to the parents that the right questions will be asked and your child will be supported to make the right decisions as he/she go through the school process.

Berkeley Guardians works closely with you, your Agent (where applicable), the School and your child's Homestay Family. We believe that strong communication is vital to ensure a smooth transition to life in the UK and continuing through the school years to build confidence and trust.

Should you be using an Education Agent and will be expecting your Agent to liaise with us for all arrangements for your child, you will need to sign a Waiver Agreement to allow us permission to speak to your chosen Agent. *Please see website for a link to this agreement.*

GENERAL INFORMATION

Life in the United Kingdom:

Your child will have a wonderful time studying in the UK but it will be different in many ways to that he/she has been used to at home. There are traditions which are recognised here which may be new but interesting to experience. There will be many opportunities through school, homestay and Berkeley Guardians to enjoy the sights and tourist attractions in and around the area they have chosen to study or stay.

We would always recommend that your child (dependent on age) does not travel alone or at night particularly in situations where he/she is likely to be at risk. All children under the age of 16 years, should not be travelling independently and we would expect to accompany (or the host family accompany) in all situations for these children.

Safeguarding and Child Protection:

Our staff all have the same approach to the care of young people and have undergone rigorous safeguarding, child protection and Prevent training. Both directors of the company, have complemented this by training as Designated Safeguarding Leads in order to have a full understanding and practice in keeping young people safe. All our staff are trained in first aid and are encouraged to attend the First Aid Mental Health (2 day) course.

In conjunction with this demanding expectation for our staff, we work with our host families to ensure that they have an understanding of different cultures, dietary needs, religious requirements and language issues should there be a need. We also expect them to undertake the Prevent and Anti-radicalisation training online and ensure they understand all safeguarding and child protection requirements in order to be fully aware and regularly send out a newsletter informing them of updates to the protection requirements.

Our **Safeguarding Policy** can be found on our website in the Policies section, along with all the other policies.

We take all safeguarding and child protection issues or complaints seriously and respond quickly to any concerns with the child involved always at the centre of care and should this involve a host family member we would remove the child immediately from the home and take him/her into the emergency home allocation. We would inform the Local Social Services (LADO) and would, of course, inform you as soon as possible.

Missing Child Policy:

Our Missing Child Policy can be found on the website under the Policies section and we ensure that all homestay families and staff at Berkeley Guardians are made aware of this. Each homestay is given a copy of important policies for their information in a file and we ask that they sign a form to confirm that they have read these policies and will act in accordance with them should the need occur.

We would always contact you as soon as possible should your son/daughter be missing and, of course, will contact the police as per our policy - please see the **Missing Child Policy** on our website.

Parent Agreement:

We at Berkeley Guardians believe that we work in loco parentis on your behalf when your child is in our care and as such would like to reassure you that we take this role seriously and believe it is a privilege to support you.

Please see the **Parent Agreement** on our website.

Homesickness and Settling In:

We are very aware that a move to the UK will be a daunting prospect to many young people and we will be keeping in regular contact with the School to ensure that everything is being done to support your son/daughter, should they be feeling homesick or finding it hard to settle.

Some pupils will find this harder than others and depending on the severity of the situation, we would ensure that a Berkeley Guardian will be on hand to visit and speak to your child to give as much support as possible. We would always let you know that this is the situation and what we have done to support.

Travel Arrangements:

We will collect from the airport at the start of terms and collect from school to take to the airports at the end of terms (or half terms), unless you have informed us that you will deal with these arrangements.

We understand that many parents will return with their child, especially at the start of their education in the UK and will want to combine this with a tour of the UK as a family. However, we would expect to collect unless told otherwise and a Berkeley Guardian will be at the airport to meet your child. If you would like us to arrange a family trip to the UK to settle your child at school, please do let us know.

We only use drivers who are DBS checked (police checked) and they will be wearing lanyards to identify themselves and will be holding a board with your child's name and school. We will inform you in advance of the name of the driver and all drivers will be suitably insured and will show identification if required.

If you require your child to return to school or travel to the airport by coach/train and you want them to travel independently, you will need to sign the Waiver Agreement(1) so that you take responsibility for their care once they have left school, airport or host property. We understand that some older pupils will want to travel with friends or alone and providing they are over 16 years and you have given permission that is acceptable.

For any requests to Berkeley Guardians for travel arrangements including drivers or guardian meets - we would ask that you allow 4 weeks' notice in order for us to ensure that the plans are firmly in place and all parties (school, pupil, host family if necessary and yourselves) are fully informed of the schedule. Please use the email: support@berkeleyguardians.com to ask for any arrangements to be made.

Should you be using our homestays then we will arrange either for the homestay adult to collect/return your child to school or a member of Berkeley Guardians will be responsible for organising this. You will be informed as to the arrangements, prior to the stay. All homestay adults have insurance appropriate to their needs.

ROLE OF SCHOOL, HOMESTAY AND GUARDIAN

We believe it is vital to ensure that all parties who care for your child are in regular and open communication wherever possible to give your child the very best care possible. This triangulation ensures the wrap around care that we believe is so important ensuring that your child feels safe, secure and there is always someone that he/she can turn to when they feel concerned.

School:

Whilst your child is at school, the school becomes responsible for your child's safety and well-being, but we will always be in regular contact with the Housemaster or Housemistress to ensure that we are aware of achievements and concerns. We will ensure that the school has received the necessary information with regard to medical needs, dietary needs etc. and this will begin the open communication that keeps all those concerned about your child in touch.

A Guardian Angel from our Agency will take responsibility for your child and will arrange a meeting with the Housemaster or Housemistress to discuss how he/she is settling and this will give an opportunity to discuss the appropriateness of homestay requirements. The guardian will attend parents' meetings and will write a summary of report to inform you of the academic progress of your child. You will receive information on the Guardian Angel and contact email address.

The Housemaster or Housemistress for your child's boarding house will have our contact details, including our emergency phone contact (24/7 use) and will be encouraged to keep in touch with the positives as well as any concerns they may have linked to academic or pastoral issues.

Arrangements for the Provision of Updates - Pastoral and Academic

We will have a formal meeting once a term with the House staff either in person or over the phone in which we will ask for a full pastoral update and an understanding of how he/she is settling with friends and taking on responsibility for his/her independence. There will be a parents' meeting once a year in which we will act in loco parentis and attend in order to write a summary report for you.

Should there be any concerns voiced by your child to us (or you) about life in school; we will take this very seriously and would immediately organise a visit to the premises to meet and discuss the concerns. We will in these circumstances be keeping you in touch as soon as possible and will discuss with you the decision about the way forward to support your child.

Homestay:

In order for your child to feel safe, secure and appreciate the warm welcome of their host family, it is important for us to ensure that all his/her needs are met. This includes whether your child loves sport and would enjoy playing football regularly with other children or perhaps wants to continue regular practice of a musical instrument and in either case, we would want to place your child with the best host family to suit him/her.

All our host families are offering their homes because they choose to take in guests to share their home and their family lives. They want the child in their care to enjoy their

time away from school and it enables the host family to share their interests and enjoy the different interests that your child will have.

The hosts will perhaps take your child on a day trip to see the sights and enjoy a break from work and school. We would expect your host family to treat your child as if their own and encourage them to try new things and yet respect their wishes and culture too.

Berkeley Guardians will be in regular touch with the homestays to ensure that your child is settled well and we will be in touch with your son/daughter on arrival at the homestay and then regularly through their stay to ensure that all is well. Both the hosts and your child will have the emergency phone number which is available 24/7 and we will respond as quickly as we can to any request. Should there be a need to change the homestay this will incur a charge unless it is due to a safeguarding concern.

Guardian:

A Guardian Angel will be appointed to oversee the day to day needs of your child and will take an interest in his/her education and academic progress. He/she will speak to us about any concerns that have been picked up and we will share this with you as well as informing you of how we will deal with the issue.

As Guardians for every child in our care, we want to ensure that we build a strong and professional working relationship with each individual and their family to develop open communication, regular contact and a trust in us that we will always be there when needed and more.

Should you have any safeguarding concerns linked to a member of staff, homestay or school, please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead (details on inside front cover) or her deputy. Should the concern be about one or other of the Directors - please contact the other one only or speak to the Local Safeguarding Board (number is listed in this booklet).

HOMESTAY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What can you expect from a homestay?

As a parent, it is important to know that your child is safe, welcomed and enjoying their time in the homestay during school holidays. We, at Berkeley Guardians, want to make sure that everything is ready and prepared for your child to enjoy their time with their host family.

Before your child arrives, we will have ensured that the family has been DBS checked (police checked) for all those over 16 years. We will have inspected the homestay to comply with AEGIS requirements to ensure a high standard and level of safety and security. Having done all this, we will meet with the family and reassure them with details about your child and what to expect including their dietary needs and allergies so that they are ready and prepared to welcome him/her. This information will be collected on the application form.

We will ensure that your homestay host has appropriate insurance for driving your child and with your permission (consent form online) we will encourage them to organise trips to show off their town/city and make your child feel at home.

Depending on the age of your son/daughter, we will agree on access arrangements for the homestay. This will include allowing independent shopping trips, meeting friends etc. and we will discuss this with you too so that we are all aware of what is expected and allowed, including allowing your child a key to the homestay house if of an appropriate age. We do give guidance to homestays on caring for your child, curfews, bedtimes etc.

2. What types of accommodation in homestays can you expect?

Most of our accommodation falls into the categories below:

Single room

Twin/double room for one

Single room with ensuite

Twin/double room for two (share)

All accommodation will provide either ensuite or access to a lockable bathroom and somewhere in the kitchen to keep food appropriately. We will always ensure that your child is given access to a quiet place to study and to be able to make drinks and snacks.

3. Can I request or change homestay arrangements?

We will organise homestay requirements for your child with pleasure and, where possible, will try and place them with friends or with a family who will support your child with their music or academic needs.

If you need to arrange a homestay for your child please let us know with at least 4 weeks' notice so that we have time to find a suitable home that will really suit your child. Whether this is for a half term or exeat weekend or for a longer period the more notice we have the more time we have to find the most appropriate accommodation and family for your child.

It is important to note that if you need your child to stay in the UK over Christmas this will come with a surcharge as these homestays are more difficult to find as many families welcome their relatives to stay over Christmas.

Occasionally, there may be a need to change the homestay perhaps because of the need to be in a different part of the UK or because friends would like to be closer. Whatever the reason is, we will do all we can to help and support this request if it is given to us in plenty of time - we would ask for a minimum of four weeks' notice if a change from the previous homestay is required.

4. What happens if my child needs an emergency homestay?

Occasionally, there may be a medical issue or sometimes a discipline issue that has culminated in a suspension from school. In these cases we have an emergency homestay which we would place your child in until we have time to decide with you on the best course of action.

The emergency homestay is somewhere that is only used for emergencies and therefore we can act immediately if the school needs to remove your child from the school as an emergency for whatever reason. If this reason is due to a disciplinary procedure then there will be a surcharge for you to pay. If it is a medical need, there is likely only to be the cost of the normal homestay unless there is a risk to the host family and we would discuss this with you at the time.

If there is an emergency in the allocated homestay, we will, of course, move your child to a different homestay immediately.

5. Do you return to visit homestays or visit children staying there?

We regularly contact our homestay families to check on the “settling in” of the children in our care and to ensure that both sides are happy with the arrangement. Should there be any need to update you on the provision (or lack of) or opportunities connected with your child’s homestay, we will contact you as soon as possible with regard to this.

As a regular annual event, we will be inspecting all our homestays to ensure that the services they offer your child are kept up to date and within the legal requirements. If you require access to the inspection checks we are happy to discuss this with you.

Should there be any concerns voiced by your child to us (or you) about life in the homestay; we will take this very seriously and would immediately organise a visit to the premises to meet and discuss the concerns. We will in these circumstances be keeping you in touch as soon as possible and will discuss with you the decision about the way forward to support your child.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Pupil Bank Accounts and Personal Finances

Berkeley Guardians is on hand to take your son/daughter through the necessary steps to open an account with a UK bank or arrange a UK mobile phone. Please let us know how best we can support and help with the pupil finances.

If setting up a bank account, he/she will require Visa documents, passport and other documents depending on age and what type of account is required. We would be happy to give further detailed requirements when you request this support.

Disbursement Account - Expenses:

This bank account is used purely for parent expenses and we will keep you regularly informed of what monies you have in this account. Please see the Parent/Carer Agreement for further information.

We will ask you for £1500 to start the academic year to be placed in the Disbursement Account in order to pay for the homestays, travel expenses etc. as required. We will inform you of any monies used and at the start of each term, we will ask you to top it up and/or invoice you for extra costs. At all times, you will be informed of expenditure.

Should there be large amounts required, eg flights then we would ask you to top up the disbursement account prior to Berkeley Guardians being able to purchase the flights.

Berkeley Guardian Fees:

Full details of our fees can be found on the Fees List which will have been forwarded to you with the Prospectus. Please do ask us for another copy should you need it.

Should you need further information please contact us at: Support@berkeleyguardians.com

We would strongly advise you to contact us if you find at any time during your contract with us that you are finding it difficult to meet your payments.

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

Complaints Procedure for Parents/Carer:

Should you find yourselves needing to formally complain about an issue, an action or a member of our staff we would ask you to use the **General Complaints Form** on the website and forward it to the Directors: Karen Pickles and Jo Clark. Should the complaint be about one of the Directors - please forward it to the other one only.

We assure you that we will deal with these complaints in a thorough and serious approach and will respond to you as soon as we have investigated the complaint. If it requires a meeting then we would be happy to arrange this.

Should the complaint be linked to a safeguarding concern, we would ask you to use the emergency number and ensure that you are speaking to one of the Directors of Berkeley Guardians. We will act on your complaint immediately and ask you to tell us of your concern and to whom it applies and then ask you to write this information down clearly on our complaints form which you will find online - **Concern/Allegation Form**.

We are keen to know about any concerns or “niggles” as well as complaints - please talk to us before a situation becomes very serious.

Should you have a safeguarding issue or concern that you feel needs support from the Local Safeguarding Board - please see the number at the front of the booklet.