

Homestay – Student Guidelines .

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Homestay is a business provided by McKennas Homestay , McKennas Homestay have provided accommodation to students studying at Rambert School for well over 15 years , they have also previously provided accommodation for other language Schools in the Borough of Richmond upon Thames .

Your contract for your homestay accommodation will be with McKennas Homestay and Rambert School do not manage the accommodation, although we do have a good working relationship with the business owner Christine McKenna, any questions about the business and how it is regulated should be directed to Christine McKenna .

We hope you will find the following information useful. As customs in different countries vary, you may be surprised by the way things are done here in the UK.

If you are a UK student this information may also be useful.

Your homestay family/host should treat you as one of the family, but this means that you will need to fit in with their family routine, which may be different to what you are used to. If there is anything that you do not understand or are unhappy about, please do not be afraid to ask your host. Misunderstandings can sometimes occur because of language difficulties and it is best to sort out any worries at the beginning! You can of course at any time contact the homestay provider , Christine McKenna or in certain circumstances come chat with Judy Bowden , Head of Student Support at Rambert School.

A homestay does not provide guests with a service similar to a hotel. Politeness and friendliness are a normal part of English family life and it is customary to say “good morning”, “good evening” and “thank you” to your hosts when they have been helpful. They should do the same.

Please note that when staying in a homestay, you are staying as a guest of the host family. It is therefore very different from an apartment share or a student residence. When staying with a host family you should respect the house rules, including limiting your luggage to

one or two suitcases. If you require more baggage and therefore a large amount of storage space, this must be indicated in your request.

Your room is your own private area for sleeping, relaxing and studying. Your room will be cleaned before you arrive. It is your responsibility to keep the room clean and tidy during your stay. Bedrooms in family homes do not usually have their own key. Your privacy will be respected, but (if there is a bedroom key) please do not lock your room when you leave the home. Heating is normally switched off at night while you sleep. Friends should not be brought to your room, either to visit or stay overnight, without your host's permission. You are not entitled to use the room to accommodate anyone other than yourself.

If you wish to play music, or if your room has a TV, please keep the volume low and respect your hosts' need for quiet, both at bed-time and possibly at other times during the day. If you wish to plug in your own appliances (such as a computer or radio), please check with your host first. The UK uses appliances with 220 volts, which is different from some other countries such as the USA and some Latin American countries.

Your host will provide duvet and a duvet cover plus pillow-cases, and will advise you how often these will be changed and washed, if you are cold at night do let your host know and they should be able to provide a thicker duvet or additional blanket.

You would usually be able to use the main living areas of the house such as the sitting and dining rooms. Most students watch TV or converse with the family in one of the communal rooms. If you have breakfast and evening meal at your homestay accommodation, your meals will usually be taken with the family.

Please note you cannot use any other room in the house to store your belongings, unless in special circumstances where the host family has granted permission.

Your host is responsible for cleaning the communal areas of the house, but you should help keep the home tidy by not leaving your belongings around.

In winter, homes are centrally heated. Heating is normally regulated by a timer and set to go off at certain times of the day when the family is not at home. If you are not warm enough, please discuss this with your host. It is advisable to keep a hoodie / jacket handy

for extra warmth in or out of the home. English homes are not usually air-conditioned in summer but the climate is rarely unbearably hot and rooms can be cooled by opening a window.

English bathrooms may be different from what you are used to in your own country. For example, some may have a hand held shower attachment instead of an overhead shower. It is not common for bathrooms to have bidets. The number of bathrooms per home will vary, and unless you have a room with private bathroom, you will usually have to share a bathroom with other people. It is important to be considerate and not to spend a long time bathing or showering if others are waiting to use the bathroom. As there will be some busy times during the day (such as early in the morning) for bathroom use, it is best to agree bathroom usage times in advance with your hosts. This way you can be sure to be on time for classes and other family members can get to work/ school.

Please leave the bathroom as you would wish to find it as there may be someone waiting to use it straight after you. Please take care not to leave a wet floor, your personal toothbrush and other items should be left tidy out of respect for others.

Your host will provide toilet paper, but you should purchase your own “toiletries” such as toothpaste, body soap/shower gel, shampoo etc. Please do not help yourself to other peoples’ toiletries. Toilet paper should not be removed from the bathroom for cosmetic use. Chemist shops such as Boots offer a wide choice of good, inexpensive bath products and cosmetics. Used toilet paper should be disposed of in the toilet (not in the rubbish bin) while feminine sanitary/hygienic products and cotton wool should be disposed of in the bathroom rubbish bin (not in the toilet).

If your host has a washing machine they will either allow you to use it once a week or do your laundry for you on a weekly basis. It is a good idea to check laundry facilities with your host soon after arrival as some hosts do the weekly wash on a specific day each week. You should offer to buy washing powder for your laundry if you are doing it yourself. If you need to use the washing machine or have your washing done more than once a week, you should ask your host if this would be possible. If doing your own laundry, you should ask your host where you can hang your clothes to dry. Clothes should not be dried in bedrooms or bathrooms.

If you are to be provided meals, meal times in the UK vary from family to family. Generally speaking, English families eat earlier than, for example, in continental Europe. It is important that you check with the family as soon as you arrive, what time breakfast and dinner are served. If these times conflict with your study schedule, you should discuss this with your host. If you have an evening meal with your accommodation and cannot get home on time on a certain evening, you should telephone your host to advise them. They may be able to leave your dinner ready for you to reheat when you return.

Breakfast times are normally arranged according to the time that your host has to get to work. If breakfast time is too early or late for you, you may have to prepare your own breakfast. This should be discussed with your host who will explain where to find the breakfast ingredients. It is important to note that very few English families eat a traditional English cooked breakfast on a regular basis. Your accommodation includes Continental Breakfast.

English food may be different from what you are used to. It may be necessary for you to adapt to the new flavours or way in which food is cooked. It is unlikely that you will be provided with bottled (mineral) water as most British families drink the tap water, which is safe and palatable.

Dinners: If there is anything you particularly dislike or cannot eat, please discuss this with your host. Continental Breakfast normally consists of fruit juice, cereal, toast or bread with butter and marmalade or jam and tea or coffee. If you should wish to purchase extra breakfast items for yourself, please check with your host first and arrange to keep them in the refrigerator.

Please note, that you will not be entitled to use the kitchen except to make tea or coffee, unless you have booked Self-Catering accommodation or Bed & Breakfast accommodation and the host family allow free use.

Please do not take any food from your host's kitchen without asking first. Your host will provide you with the meals booked but this does not include snacks throughout the day.

You will be expected to wash all dishes, pots and pans and clean the kitchen thoroughly after use.

Please do not store or eat food in your bedroom.

Please note that hosts are not professional chefs and are unlikely to have undertaken any training or have qualifications in the preparation of food. They are preparing meals for themselves and their families and you will be joining them. Their meals may contain products with peanuts, tree nuts, soy, milk, eggs and wheat. Even if it is not clearly obvious that the food contains any of these ingredients, there may have been cross-contamination somewhere in the production or the preparation of their meals. Please be aware of this if you are provided meals and make your host family aware if you have any allergies.

Homestay homes will have a current certificate issued by a GAS-SAFE registered plumber. Escape routes in case of fires will be established and electrical wiring will be in good order and a smoke alarm will be installed .

All members of the household who are over the age of 18 will be DBS checked and this should be renewed every 3 years .

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