



HOLMEWOOD HOUSE SCHOOL

'Kindness, aspiration & self-belief'

Policy Holder	The Bursar
Date Approved	September 2024
Approval	SLT
Date for next review	May 2025

POLICY FOR INTERNATIONAL PUPILS

I. VISA REQUIREMENTS

All pupils must have a right to live and study in the UK to allow them to study at Holmewood House School. In the case of international pupils who do not already have a right to live in the UK, the school is approved as a Student Sponsor by the UK Home Office, which enables us to sponsor pupils to come to the UK.

The school's Student Sponsor licence issued by the UK Home Office allows us to recruit overseas pupils as Day or Boarding pupils. With the school licence comes several continuous and on-going responsibilities which we must always comply with. Any school that does not comply with the terms of the licence granted by the Home Office will prejudice their licence and may have it withdrawn by the Home Office. Where this occurs, all international pupils must leave the school and make a new visa application. The school is subject to inspection by the Home Office at any time with or without notice. The impact, therefore, on pupils and the school can be very serious.

To ensure that pupils and parents comply with the UK Government's requirements, on visa entry, the school has contracted ICSSA (Immigration Compliance Solutions for School Admissions), a specialist UK immigration consultancy that specialises in student visas and school licences, to complete and submit all visa applications, whether these are overseas applications, or renewal visas in the UK.

ICSSA contact details are:

Merlin House, Langstone Business Park, Newport, UK NP18 2HJ

ICSSA is an authorised advisor of the OISC, (Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner), the government body set up to ensure that immigration advice is provided by suitably qualified organisations.

Points to note

This policy applies to the whole school including Boarding

International Pupils Policy 2024

Pupils joining from another school in the UK must have submitted a visa application, sponsored by Holmewood House School, before they start their studies at school.

If the pupil is aged 4-11, they can live with one parent who has a Parent of Child Student Visa.

Pupils holding a Child Student Visa who are aged 12-13 cannot live with a parent and should become Full Boarders. They can only remain as day pupils if they live with a close family relative over the age of 25 who holds a British passport or who has Indefinite Leave to Remain, or a Private Foster Carer, arranged in conjunction with the school and LEA.

Child Student/ Student Visa Application Process

Step 1

The Admissions Department at the school must have received the following before the CAS process can be started:

- A signed Acceptance Form along with the acceptance deposit
- A completed guardian agreement (except where a pupil is a Day pupil and accompanied by a parent with a parent who has a Parent of Child Student Visa).
- A copy of the pupil's passport
- A copy of the pupil's birth certificate
- A copy of the parents' passports

Step 2

On receipt of the above, the school will send a CAS application form to ICSSA who will contact parents directly for the information and copies of documentation required to complete the visa application. When they are satisfied that the application will be compliant ICSSA will:

- Issue the CAS on behalf of the school
- Complete the online visa application on behalf of parents
- Assist with booking the visa appointment at the visa application centre in the country of residence if required (EU process is different)
- Send all the required paperwork with clear instructions on what needs to be signed and taken to the appointment.
- Upload relevant documents.
- Provide the school with a copy of the 'Letter of Consent to Study'

In the unlikely event of a visa refusal, ICSSA will assist with the administrative review.

Parents responsibilities after the completion of the visa application

Once the visa process is completed the school's responsibilities to the UK Home Office do not end at this point, they begin. To ensure that the school remains compliant with its obligations we require that parents keep us informed of any changes relevant to the child, these may include but are not limited to:

- Keeping us updated of parents' contact details
- Updating us of any changes to the child's UK guardian
- Notifying us of any immigration applications that have been made for the child.
- Notifying us if the child has lost or renewed any important documents, such as passport, Biometric Residence Permit or Police Registration Certificate.
- Notifying us of any changes to the people holding parental responsibility for the child.

During Exeats and school holidays or any period of temporary school closure, parents/guardians must always inform their child's House Parent of their whereabouts whilst they remain in the UK and, of course of **any**

return home (and provide the travel arrangements/flight details). This information will be provided through the *i-GTM system*, specialised software used by Holmewood House to record our sponsored pupils' travel, both Day and Boarding pupils.

If the pupil is staying with a guardian for more than 28 consecutive days, the Head of Boarding must be notified immediately as this will need to be referred to the local council. This is called a Private Fostering Referral. The local council (where the child is staying) will need to speak to the guardian and undertake a home visit to the guardian to approve the living arrangements. Any requirements of the local council must be complied with.

Please note this list is not exhaustive and if there are any other changes which parents feel may be important for us to be aware of, we encourage them to share these with us.

2. EDUCATIONAL GUARDIANSHIP

In response to current Government legislation, Holmewood House School, in promoting and safeguarding the welfare of every pupil, requires parents who are resident outside of the UK to appoint a UK based educational guardian to act on their behalf. This applies to all pupils in the school irrespective of age.

Government legislation protects the rights of children and makes 'proper and appropriate care' a compulsory requirement.

During term-time, the School is legally responsible for each pupil's welfare, and undertakes delegated parental responsibilities. However, there are times, for example:

- at the start and end of term when a pupil's flights do not coincide with term dates
- half-term breaks
- if the School requires a pupil to leave for disciplinary reasons or because the School determines it to be in the pupil's best interests
- if the pupil is ill or injured and needs to recuperate away from the School
- any other occasion when the pupil is released from the School
- when the School must be able to hand over these parental responsibilities to a properly appointed educational guardian who is independent of the School and acts as the parents' representative in the UK.

This will be required for the duration of their child's attendance at the School.

It is important to recognise the distinction between Educational Guardians and Legal Guardians. Educational Guardian is not a legal term and should not be used interchangeably with the term Legal Guardian. An educational guardian is someone who has been appointed to care for pupils whose parents are not based in the UK, when the pupil is not in School.

Following the changes to the National Minimum Standards of Boarding 2022, Standard 22 is now explicitly about 'Educational Guardianship'. As a result of these changes, the school has greater and more specific responsibility for the quality of guardianship arrangements.

Following this change, the school requires that families appoint AEGIS/BSA accredited guardians. In very exceptional circumstances, the school may consider an alternative arrangement.

The school does not recommend specific guardianship organisations, but parents should seek guardianship accredited through AEGIS/BSA. Holmewood House School cannot in any way be held responsible for the choice of guardian that parents make, and we strongly recommend that parents carefully check the accreditation of any guardianship organisation they propose to use. The types of services that they can offer

include arranging homestay accommodation, and travel to the airport, attending parents' meetings and generally providing support to the pupil during their stay in the UK.

Parents have the responsibility to appoint a guardian in whom they have confidence to provide for and safeguard the very best interests of their child.

An appointed guardian will:

- Be a 24-hour point of contact for parents, pupils, the school and host family.
- Act with delegated parental authority in the case of an emergency or crisis.
- Provide both pastoral and educational support, including attendance at parents' evening where necessary and appropriate.
- Liaise with the school and parents over holiday arrangements.
- Make appropriate arrangements for medical care, including emergency admissions to hospital.
- Inform the school in writing about all the details of travel arrangements made prior to a child leaving the school for a holiday period. The school must know the exact details of pupils' accommodation and methods and dates of transportation.
- Retain overall responsibility for visa/passport arrangements at the start and end of term in conjunction with parents (who retain legal responsibility).
- Not be a member of Holmewood House School staff.
- Be English speaking - while it is not necessary for English to be a first language, but a minimum level of fluency is required to ensure communications can be fully understood.
- Be available 24 hours a day in the case of an emergency.

Guardians should also respect the rights, religion and customs of a child, and adhere to what is commonly regarded as best practice in the guardianship and hosting of international pupils. This includes having in place a proper agreement with the pupil's parents as to what the guardian's responsibilities may entail.

If a pupil does not have a guardian when required to do so by the school, or the appointed guardian is considered by the school to be unsatisfactory; the school will invite parents to find a new guardian. Should parents fail to do so, either they will be required to use a guardian organisation recommended by AEGIS / BSA, or the child may not be accepted into the school.

Parents should never terminate an agreement with one guardian before having an alternative agreement in place with a new guardian.

It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that the school is notified immediately of any change to the guardianship arrangements for a pupil.

3. TRAVEL

It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to arrange travel at the beginning and end of terms, as well as at half term. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to make travel arrangements well in advance which meets the appropriate child safeguarding requirements. All travel arrangements for both Day and Boarding pupils must be recorded, by the parent or guardian, in *i-GTM*, specialised software to record 100% of our boarders' and sponsored pupils travel. Please note that House parents do not arrange taxis to/from the airport, coach or railway station on behalf of parents or guardians but will approve travel arrangements using the *i-GTM* software.

It is the School's expectation that public transport will not be used by pupils to travel to and from School at the start and end of term.

Parents have ultimate responsibility in ensuring that pupils have the appropriate and required documentation and approval from the relevant authorities to enter the UK. Whilst the school is the sponsor of the pupil where a visa is required and will provide all necessary support and guidance in respect of the regulations in force at any time, it remains a parental responsibility to ensure that each pupil entering Holmewood House School complies with the UK immigration and entry requirements that pertain at that time.

4. ARRIVAL AT AND DEPARTURE FROM HOLMEWOOD HOUSE SCHOOL

Term dates are published well in advance, and parents/guardians must book tickets in good time to ensure that the pupils arrive and leave on the designated day. The School does not sanction late arrival or early departures at any time as this will affect a pupil's academic progress and could affect their visa eligibility. It is imperative therefore, that pupils do not arrive late, nor leave early at the start/end of any holiday. Term dates are published with a Boarders return date, this means that they should arrive on that afternoon and no later than 18:00hrs.

5. TUITION IN ENGLISH

Overseas pupils for whom English is not their first language are tested before entry to the school to determine their precise level of ability and needs. The result of this test is used to help us to decide how to support the pupil in mainstream lessons and to provide an appropriate level of EAL tuition, if required.

To access the curriculum provided at Holmewood House School and to cope with the social demands, it is helpful if pupils are fluent English speakers. However, we have, and will continue to, accept children with less than fluent English, provided they are able to participate in the full curriculum.

Pupils are not entitled to EAL (English as an Additional Language) tuition as part of the mainstream curriculum. Instead, pupils taking EAL tuition are taught in small groups, or in 1-1 lessons and/or receive 1-1 support within the classroom. EAL Tuition is charged as 'extra' on the school bill. Costs can be viewed on the Fee Schedule on the school website. The precise nature of this tuition varies according to age of entry to the school, their level of English and the duration of their stay.

We recommend that new overseas pupils whose English is not fluent attend an intensive course in English prior to joining the school.

From time to time, English and activity holiday courses are run at Holmewood House, parents will be provided with the dates by the Admissions office.