

STRATHMORE SECONDARY COLLEGE

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM

HOMESTAY FAMILY GUIDE



2025/2026

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THE ROLE OF THE HOMESTAY PROVIDER (HOST FAMILY)

This Homestay Family Guide is to assist host families who have agreed to accommodate international students in their homes for a designated period. It is the role of the school to assist host families with any difficulties associated with their host student.

Homestay providers are required to provide a warm, friendly and flexible approach to their international student in order to provide for a safe, comfortable and caring environment, while keeping in regular contact with the college to ensure a prompt response when difficulties arise.

Homestay providers should not have to change their daily routine greatly (except perhaps in transport assistance) to accommodate their international student. Homestay providers should be flexible and sensitive to the cultural differences between Australia and the country of origin of the international student and should encourage them to always speak English.

HOMESTAY GUIDELINES 2025/2026

1. A Student under 18 years of age who is studying in a Government School must live in a homestay. Older students may also live in a homestay and are expected to follow the homestay guidelines. All people living in the home, who are over 18, require a 'Working with Children Check'.
2. The homestay provider is required to provide three meals per day along with snacks as appropriate. It is expected that the international student will have evening meals with the family. This allows for improved communication and for the family and the international student to get to know each other. The student's weekly homestay fee includes all meals so if a family dines out or purchases takeaway meals, the student's meal should be paid for by the provider.
3. Homestay includes all expenses associated with food and shelter, including three meals a day, seven days a week, provision of facilities (e.g. towels, blankets, sheets, eating utensils) gas & electricity and cleaning (e.g. cleaning of room, washing of clothes and bed linen.) Cleaning of clothes and bedroom can be negotiated chores.
4. Homestay providers are asked to help the student on their arrival with public transport, location of local shops, arranging bank account, a SIM card and school uniform. International students aged 16 years of age or under can purchase and travel on children's MYKI public transport tickets and they should carry a form of age identification. Students aged 17 and 18 are eligible for concession travel but must have PTV school student ID (applications available at school or train station) and also should carry a form of age identification.
5. Homestay students pay \$385 inclusive of internet access. This is not to be changed or negotiated by the student or homestay.
6. Parents will pay the school and the school will set up 2 weekly or 4 weekly payments to the homestay.
7. Students are required to stay at the homestay for a term at a minimum. Only in exceptional circumstances will we allow students to move earlier. Students may not arrange a move of homestay without consulting the International Student Manager.
8. Students are required to give two weeks notice if they wish to move from the homestay. Homestays are required to give two weeks notice if they wish the student to leave the home. Ms Di Battista must be notified immediately of this intention.
9. Students may return to their home countries during term holidays and are charged \$140 a week (\$20 per night) to hold their room over a holiday period – up to a maximum of \$700. This payment is to ensure that the room is available upon the student's return. Students must tell Ms Di Battista and their Homestay parents if they are returning home and a Travel Form must be completed, signed by the homestay and submitted along with a copy of the airline ticket to Mrs Di Battista.

10. If a student attends a school camp and stays overnight they will only be charged \$20.00 per night that they are away.
11. Students are provided with their own bedroom with study facilities (e.g. bookcase, desk and study light) together with the use of living areas.
12. House rules will be clearly explained to students on their arrival. To help students feel part of the family, they can be encouraged to do minor chores.
13. Students should ask their homestay to contact Ms Di Battista at Strathmore SC if they are unable to attend school. This must be done before 10am on the day of the absence. A medical certificate is required for multiple absences and missed major tests (SACs).
14. It is recommended, but not mandatory, that homestay families attend parent/teacher nights and/or College functions.
15. All homestay families receive a copy of the school's commitment to Child Safety, and an edited version of the policy that applies to homestays. Students also receive a fact sheet about child abuse. Homestays and students are provided with instructions on how to report any suspected or real event of child abuse.
16. Students must always be contactable by homestays after school hours.
17. Students are not permitted to stay away overnight from their homestay unless for an approved school event.
18. If the student wants to stay at a friend's house overnight this must be arranged with Ms Di Battista at least 7 working days beforehand. Written permission must be provided by the student's parent/s and everyone over the age of 18, in that household, must have a current Working With Children Card.
19. Students under 18 years of age are not allowed to travel independently outside Victoria.
20. Students will need to communicate with homestay providers to notify of a change in plan or arrangements. Curfew times, travel arrangements and social outings should be mutually agreed upon - with consideration given to the age and maturity of the student.
21. Students are generally not permitted out late during the school week except for college functions. Students may be out later Friday or Saturday with prior arrangement with the homestay.
22. House rules may need to be negotiated on the matter of friends visiting and/or staying for meals.
23. Students will have their own key to the residence. Privacy is important and the personal possessions and space of students should be respected.
24. Students need to pay for any significant breakages or damage (a minimum of three quotes will be required to be obtained by the homestay and provided to the parents and Ms Di Battista).
25. Homestays must provide access to the internet. Students should be discouraged from downloading large files such as movies and music. If there is a problem, contact Ms Di Battista.
26. The homestay provider is required to provide support to the international student in seeking medical assistance. The homestay provider must then be responsible for notification to the school regarding the medical assistance provided. Students are covered by Medibank (or other) Private Health Insurance and are covered by the Ambulance Subscribers scheme.
27. The homestay commits to having smoke detectors appropriately installed (mandatory) in working order see MFB website for more information: <http://www.mfb.vic.gov.au/Community-Safety/Home-Fire-Safety/Smoke-Alarms.html>
28. Please ring your home & contents insurer and inform them you have an international student in your home on an ongoing basis.
29. The homestay provider must notify the college of any changes to the student's living arrangements once there is a change from the initial agreement or after one of the college-organised inspections. For example, someone else living in the house, absence of one of the homestay parents for more than a few days or when a member of the household turns 18 years of age.
30. The homestay provider is required to provide time for a college-organised homestay inspection once per semester to be conducted by the International Student Program Manager.

SETTING HOUSEHOLD RULES

The following issues commonly need clarification when integrating a new student into your family.

If you inform your international student about the rules in your household it will assist him/her to settle into a routine quickly and easily.

- Appropriate times for using bathrooms, including time spent in the shower
- Washing of laundry
- Mealtimes
- Turning lights out and hours of internet use
- Other house rules

COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Generally, in most situations, the homestay provider would deal with many of the 'low level' issues themselves. However, it is recommended that the college be kept informed regarding inappropriate behaviour and issues that arise where there is a concern.

In the event of a problem, the homestay provider should attempt to resolve those difficulties. The homestay provider or the student is required to communicate with the International Student Manager regarding any concerns.

The most commonly experienced difficulties regarding international students include:

- Too quiet, too shy, would not talk to us or other household members.
- Homesickness
- Shower problems
- Provision of appropriate diet
- Unsure how much freedom to give.

GRIEVANCE PROCESS

If homestay providers have any issues in relation to their student, they should firstly speak to the International Student Manager. Homestay providers are encouraged to discuss issues initially with the student where appropriate but then communicate with the International Student Manager.

INSURANCE/MEDICAL PROCEDURES

All international students have private health insurance. Should a student become ill while at homestay, the provider will:

1. notify the International Student Manager
2. support the student in seeking medical assistance and a medical certificate as appropriate.
3. the student may be required to pay for medical consultations and should obtain a receipt for insurance purposes. Medibank do have a list of Direct Billing doctors and the International Student Manager will be able to assist you with finding those closest to you.

COSTS

Public Transport	International students will cover all their own public transport costs.
Books, Uniforms	International students will cover these costs.
Outings, Excursions	The homestay provider is not expected to pay for the international student to attend excursions or school outings.

FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is of primary importance that the safety and the wellbeing of international students is maintained by all. Arrangements for travel after dark need to be agreed between the family and the student.

It is expected that the homestay provider treats their international student as though he/she is a member of their family/household. The same standards should apply as if the student is a natural member of the family.

When agreeing arrangements for outings the homestay provider should be mindful of the age, maturity and reliability of their international student. It is also the case that an 18-year-old international student is still a homestay student and not a tenant and that there is a duty of care and responsibility required. The college should be notified through the International Student Manager, of any concerns or risks. On some occasions it is necessary for the college to seek parental approval.

GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

The best way of ensuring that behaviour is appropriate is to abide by the Australian/Victorian laws, comply with the guidelines set down by the college and exercise common sense and caution with regard to the student in your care.

In exercising 'common sense and caution' homestay providers should take into account the significant cultural differences between their own notions of appropriate behaviour and that of their students.

Examples of behaviour that can be discriminatory or sexual harassment include:

- acting towards, or speaking to a person in a manner which threatens or vilifies that person
- making jokes, suggestive comments or offensive gestures related to a person's race, colour, ethnic origin, disability, gender or sexual characteristics
- distribution or display of material (including through e-mail) which may be offensive, such as sexually explicit posters or pictures, racist or sexist jokes or cartoons
- persistent questions about a person's private life
- persistent comments about appearance, size, clothing
- demands for sexual favours, either directly or by implication
- unwanted and deliberate physical contact
- indecent assault or other criminal offences

This should be understood in the context of the Child Safety Standards and other relevant policies and documents. Nevertheless, it is not our intention to stifle the warm and friendly relationship between the homestay provider and their families and international students. Homestay providers and their

families need to be aware that problems in this area do arise from time to time, and that there are legal requirements to exercise all appropriate care and consideration towards students in their care.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ORIENTATION (LIVING WITH A HOST FAMILY)

The following is a list of points that are highlighted when we orientate students upon arrival:

1. International students are encouraged to approach their homestay family if they have a problem or concern and to work it through with their host family, then approach the college.
2. International students should obey their homestay provider as they would their own parent and should respect the homestay family and not treat the home as if it is a hotel.
3. International students are informed that the homestay provider and their family will always have their wellbeing and safety in mind.
4. International students are encouraged to always speak English.
5. Not to consume alcohol or tobacco if underage, or drugs at any stage.
6. To always abide by the State and Federal laws.
7. International students are required to adhere to schedules and timetables – especially to wait at the agreed time and place when being picked up by their host family. If there are any schedule changes the International student is to inform the host family of them.
8. International students are informed that they must pay for their own personal care/hygiene products.
9. International students have been told that all household rules apply to them as they do to their host brothers and sisters.
10. International students have been told they should be wary about being approached by people they do not know and discuss any concerns they may have with their homestay provider and their college.

UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

The following are points that highlight cultural differences:

1. You may need to explain to your international student how to use the sheets and blankets on the bed (which layer to lie between) as some cultures might only have a bottom-sheet and quilt (or equivalent).
2. You may need to explain where the wet towels go, or they may turn up in some very peculiar spots.

3. Some international students may be very shy about having their underwear washed so they never bring them out. Come to some agreement as to how this will be managed.
4. Whereas in Australia it is common to express opinions readily, International students may be more modest and reserved about this.
5. In the beginning International students will not always feel confident enough to ask for food, drink, etc. so offer it to them.
6. If time permits, make contact with your student before they arrive. This will make the initial meeting feel less awkward.

STRATHMORE SECONDARY COLLEGE HOMESTAY POLICY	
ENDORSED BY COLLEGE COUNCIL:	2025
TO BE REVIEWED:	2029

RATIONALE

This policy is designed to be consistent with the DET International Students' Quality Standards. When parents opt for DET to arrange homestay accommodation, the College becomes responsible for provision of accommodation, support and general welfare to the student. These arrangements shall be in place for the period that the student will be under 18 while in Australia. This policy has been developed to meet the requirements of the ESOS National Code and Student visa (500) which require that appropriate arrangements have been made for the accommodation, welfare and support of students less than 18 years of age.

- The College will organise high quality homestay accommodation that provides a safe, comfortable and caring environment.
- The International Student Manager with the assistance of the International Student Program Administrator oversee the Homestay program, including interviewing all prospective homestays for suitability, conduct six monthly site visits, complete invoicing for homestay payment and liaise with the college Finance Manager to ensure payments received and transferred to homestay providers. The International Student Manager and ISP Administrator collaborate to resolve issues and monitor the care of students in those homestays. Students and homestays will be provided with Homestay Guidelines that outline the house rules and requirements as well as homestay costs and methods of payment.
 - The College will monitor progress of homestay arrangements, with at least 6 monthly visits and/or contact.
 - Students, parents and homestays will be asked to sign a Homestay Agreement that acknowledges acceptance of the school's Homestay Guidelines and Child Safety Policy.
 - Complaints that cannot be resolved by either the homestay provider or the student should be referred to the International Student Manager.

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed as part of the college's four-year review cycle. This policy was last ratified by College Council in June 2025 and is due to be updated and re-endorsed in 2029.

**STRATHMORE SECONDARY COLLEGE
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT
APPLICATION TO STAY AWAY OVERNIGHT
(copies available from the International Student Manager)**

STUDENT ID: _____ STUDENT NAME: _____

STUDENT MOBILE NUMBER: _____

Written parent approval must be provided with this form.

PLEASE RETURN TO THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MANAGER AT LEAST **7 WORKING DAYS PRIOR
TO YOUR FIRST NIGHT AWAY**

If you are planning overnight time away from your Homestay, please fill in the required details below:

Departure Date from Homestay:	
Return Date to Homestay:	
Number of nights away from Homestay:	
Brief description of holiday plan:	
Name of responsible adult with whom you will be staying:	
Date of Birth;	
Mobile phone number:	
Address where you will be staying:	
Working With Children Card number:	
Homestay Provider name:	
Homestay Provider mobile number:	
Homestay Provider's signature:	

*If at any time your plans change, please contact the International Student Manager,
Cathy Di Battista (w) 9379 7999 or (m) 0417 301 835
Email : caterina.dibattista@education.vic.gov.au*

STRATHMORE SECONDARY COLLEGE CHILD SAFETY & WELLBEING POLICY	
ENDORSED BY COLLEGE COUNCIL:	2024
TO BE REVIEWED:	2026

Amended version relevant for homestays of international students
The complete policy can be found on the school website

The Strathmore Secondary College (SSC) Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our school’s commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child-friendly organisation, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy:

- applies to all school staff, volunteers and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students. It also applies to school council members where indicated.
- applies in all physical and online school environments used by students during or outside of school hours, including other locations provided by for a student’s use (for example, a school camp) and those provided through third-party providers
- should be read together with our other child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and codes –

Statement of commitment to child safety

SSC is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students. We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our school environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our school environment. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQA+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful

behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at our school, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences. Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in our school has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

Roles and responsibilities

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by the school or the Department of Education and Training, and always follow the school's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, including following the Four Critical Actions for Schools
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

Child Safety Code of Conduct

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

Establishing a culturally safe environment

At SSC we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe school where the strengths of all cultures, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment.

Student empowerment

To support child safety and wellbeing at SSC we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Family engagement

Our families and the school community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at SSC we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

We do this by:

- Providing information through the parent portal, school website, newsletters, other communications, school council, subcommittees of school council, student, staff, and parent meetings etc.
- All our child safety policies and procedures will be available for students and parents at the college website or through the college reception.
- Newsletters and/or announcements posted on Compass will inform families and the school community about any significant updates to our child safety policies or processes, and strategies or initiatives that we are taking to ensure student safety.
- PROTECT Child Safety posters will be displayed across the school

Diversity and equity

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- international students

Suitable staff and volunteers

At SSC, we apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

Suitability of volunteers

All volunteers are required to comply with our Volunteers Policy, which describes how we assess the suitability of prospective volunteers and outlines expectations in relation to child safety and wellbeing

induction and training, and supervision and management.

Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices
- completing the Protecting Children – Mandatory Reporting and Other Legal Obligations online module annually
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in the school environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues

Complaints and reporting processes

SSC fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the school community to raise concerns and complaints.

If there is an incident, disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse, all staff and volunteers (including school council employees and homestay providers) must follow our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures. Our policy and procedures address complaints and concerns of child abuse made by or in relation to a child or student, school staff, volunteers, contractors, service providers, visitors or any other person while connected to the school.

STRATHMORE SECONDARY COLLEGE CRITICAL ACTION FOR HOMESTAY FAMILIES

Responding to Incidents, Disclosures and Suspicions of Child Abuse

This procedure also applies for any event that can seriously affect the safety of the child

YOU SHOULD TAKE ACTION:

As a homestay parent, you play a **critical role** in protecting children in your care. You **should** act, by following the critical actions, as soon as you witness an incident, receive a disclosure or form a reasonable belief that a child has, or at risk of being abused. You **should** act if you form a suspicion and or reasonable belief, even if you are unsure and have not directly observed child abuse (e.g. if the victim or another person tells you about the abuse).

ACTION 1: RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

If there is no risk of immediate harm go to ACTION 2

If a child is at immediate risk of harm you must ensure their safety by:

- separating alleged victims and others involved
- administering first aid if you can
- call 000 for urgent medical and/or police assistance to respond to immediate health or safety concerns
- contact SSC International Student Manager who will immediately notify the **School Principal** at the school for future liaison with Police
- ***Where necessary you may also need to maintain the integrity of the potential crime scene and preserve evidence.***

ACTION 2: REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES (Turn over for relevant emergency contact numbers)

You should report all incidents, suspicions and disclosures of child abuse as soon as possible. Failure to report physical and sexual child abuse may amount to a criminal offence.

VICTORIA POLICE: If you believe a child has been abused (including grooming), or is at risk of being abused, contact local police station or on 000 if it's an emergency.

SCHOOL - You should also report the suspected abuse to the International Student Manager who will immediately notify the School Principal (who will contact Security Services and DHS if appropriate). The IS Manager will also inform DE International Division.

ACTION 3: CONTACTING PARENTS

The school principal is responsible and must consult with Department Health and Human Services - Child Protection or Victoria Police to determine what information can be shared with parents. If parents are to be provided with details, ISC will organise assistance to contact parents in their language.

ACTION 4: PROVIDING ONGOING SUPPORT

Strathmore SC must provide support for children impacted by abuse. This should include the development of a Student Support Plan or Safety Plan, referral to wellbeing professionals, etc. SSC will work with you to ensure your homestay student is provided with appropriate support. You **must** follow the Critical Actions every time you become aware of a further instance or risk of abuse. This includes reporting new information to authorities

If you believe that a child is not subject to abuse, but you still hold significant concerns for their wellbeing you should still act. This may include seeking advice from the school or Victoria police

INFORMATION FOR HOMESTAYS: PROTECTING CHILDREN/INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM ABUSE

Children have the right to be safe and protected at school, at home and in the community. As adults we play a critical role in protecting them from all forms of abuse.

As a **homestay parent**, you have the responsibility for protecting and caring for **homestay students**. You also play a critical role in identifying and responding to suspected abuse within the community. In fact, it may amount to a criminal offence if you fail to report suspected child sexual abuse.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child abuse means actions that hurt a child or teenager. Child abuse can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, grooming, emotional or psychological harm, neglect, or family violence.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT A CHILD HAS BEEN ABUSED?

There are a range of physical and behavioural indicators of child abuse.

- A change in a child’s behaviour e.g. withdrawal, regressive behaviour
- Physical indicators of abuse, e.g. unexplained bruise
- An inappropriate relationship between an adult and a child, e.g. unexplained gifts or phone/email contacts

HELP TO KEEP HOMESTAY STUDENTS SAFE

Where appropriate have a chat to homestay student/students and make sure that they know that no one can threaten, hurt or touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Strathmore SC College will also be supporting international students in learning about their rights to be safe and respected.

If you have any concerns about the student talk to the International Student Coordinator, principal or another staff member at the school about your concerns. You can also raise this matter with DHHS Child Protection and the Victoria Police. **REFER TO CRITICAL ACTION FOR HOMESTAY FAMILIES**

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Victoria Police (24 hour services)	000
Department of Health and Human Services - Child Protection	1300 475 170 (switchboard) 131 278 (after hours: 5pm -9am)
Department of Health and Human Services	Local Government Areas (LGAs) Moonee Valley & Merri-bek Council 1300 664 977
Department of Education and Training	Footscray Office: 1300 333 232
Strathmore Secondary College	General Office (03) 9379 7999
Principal	Susanne Prosenica 0438 336 993
International Student Manager	Cathy Di Battista 0417 301 835