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EDUCATIONAL GUARDIANSHIP POLICY

Safeguarding our students and ensuring that they are looked after in a safe, caring, and nurturing environment is our utmost priority. Educational Guardianship in the UK is not currently regulated. It is therefore imperative that the school does all it can to ensure that students are being cared for by Guardians who are entirely suitable to take on the role.

As a matter of Boarding Schools' Association recommended practice and Woldingham School policy, we make it a condition of entry that parents based overseas (or who anticipate spending a significant part of the academic year outside the United Kingdom) appoint a UK-based *Educational Guardian* to support their daughter. This guardianship is required until the student leaves the school, even for those over 18 years of age. It is the parents' responsibility to appoint a suitable guardian; the school does not make arrangements on their behalf nor can it recommend any specific guardians or guardian agencies to parents.

If the Educational Guardian is not a close relative or family friend, **we strongly recommend that parents select a Guardian who has been accredited by AEGIS or the BSA Guardian Scheme** (The Association for the Education & Guardianship of International Students). This is particularly important if the Guardian/agency takes multiple students. A list of their accredited Guardians is available at <http://www.aegisuk.net>.

Once a guardian has been appointed by the parents, the *Guardianship Details* form must be completed and signed by both parents and guardian and returned to the school. Woldingham School will not accept a new student to the school until the Guardian arrangements have been confirmed. If parents have a need to change their daughter's Guardian, a new form must be completed and returned to the school to advise us of the change. The school does take appropriate steps to ensure the guardian arrangement is promoting the welfare, physical wellbeing and emotional wellbeing of the boarder (NMS 22.3). As such, the school reserves the right to decline acceptance of a Guardian if the school does not consider them suitable for the role for any reason.

An Educational Guardian is not the child's legal guardian in the sense of a "parent or guardian". An Educational Guardian acts on behalf of the parent, to the extent to which the parent has agreed to delegate specific parental roles and responsibilities. Thus, a guardianship agreement can be tailored to meet both individual family circumstances and school requirements.

Where communication between the school and parent is direct and immediate, parents need only appoint someone able to act in specific circumstances, such as overseeing travel arrangements and being available to provide accommodation, when necessary. Where parental business and other commitments, such as geographical distance, time or language differences, make immediate contact

between the school and parent less reliable, we ask parents to choose a guardian who is prepared to undertake responsibilities of a more wide-ranging nature, such as attendance at Parents' Evenings and communication about exeat arrangements.

Issues that parents may wish to consider when choosing a guardian and agreeing the scope of a guardianship agreement are: providing emotional and practical support for the student, the exchange of sensitive or even urgent information, providing accommodation, and ensuring safe travel arrangements. It is important for student safety and wellbeing that the appointed educational guardian of a student is not simply a name on paper, but willing to undertake an active role to support the student.

Support

- Supportive and caring guardians, who are in regular contact with a student, make a valuable contribution towards the development of that student's successful school career;
- Guardians are encouraged to accompany new students when they arrive at Woldingham, to become familiar with the school and to meet the boarding team. If guardians are not able to attend the Welcome Reception at the start of the year, the boarding house staff will expect to have met/been in personal contact with a student's guardian within the first three weeks of term;
- With the parents' agreement, guardians are also encouraged to attend parents' receptions and other school functions throughout the school year;
- Guardians are encouraged to be in regular contact with the Head of Year/Housemistress and Tutor.

Information

- A guardian may become the primary point of contact for the school, where there is no immediate access to the parent, or the urgency of a situation requires it;
- An appointed guardian should agree to keep the parent informed of any school concerns at the earliest opportunity;
- A guardian may be required to translate personal information for the parent;
- A guardian may receive copies of reports, if the parent so wishes.

Accommodation

- The school is closed throughout each half-term holiday and from the end of one full term until the beginning of the next full term. During these periods, residential staff return to their family homes and essential services are shut down. At the end of a half-term, students should have departed from school by 5pm at the latest and by 12pm at the latest at the end of a full term. On return after a half-term or full-term holiday, students are expected to return to school between 4pm and 8pm. The guardian will need to host the student if their return or departure is outside of these times, for example if a student arrives on a particularly early or late flight.
- When the student is unable to make the journey home, most obviously when the school is closed for shorter holidays such as half-term, but also if students are required to be away from school unexpectedly (for example, for medical or disciplinary reasons), the school requires the guardian to assume responsibility for their accommodation;

- Where any travel arrangements involve early morning or late evening flights, the guardian will be expected to arrange safe overnight accommodation;
- The guardian will be expected to host exeat or weekends visits for the student where requested;
- In order to be able to fulfil this role, **it is essential that guardians live within reasonable distance of the school – we will not accept guardians who live more than an hour away unless exceptional circumstances are outlined to the school and agreed in advance.**

Safe travel arrangements

- The school expects students to arrive in school at the time scheduled in the school calendar, unless they have been notified to the contrary, and permission is only granted in exceptional circumstances;
- If students are more than an hour late returning from holidays, exeat weekends, leave weekends, interviews or other absences, the school will contact the guardian directly. Advanced notice, typically a few weeks, is required for any early departures from school or any late arrivals back in school. Typically, such requests are acknowledged but will be recorded as unauthorised absence in line with our attendance policy;
- The guardian needs to be made aware of any alterations to a student's travel arrangements and of any delays in transit and should agree to keep the school informed of these.

Guidelines

The school will expect to hold a copy of the details of the agreement between parent and guardian on file for reference purposes and will expect to be kept informed of subsequent changes made to that agreement.

Parents are obliged to inform the Local Education Authority if the guardian appointed for their daughter is not a relative and if their daughter would be staying with the guardian for 28 days or more in a year, as this constitutes private fostering. The school will also inform the Local Education Authority of any such arrangement. A 'relative' is defined as a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt. They could be a full or half relation and could be related by marriage. The term also includes a step-parent. A cohabitee of the mother or the father would not qualify as a relative, neither would extended family such as a great aunt/uncle or parents' cousins.

The guardian appointed must be a responsible adult over the age of 25, fluent in the English language, who has a permanent or semi-permanent place of residence in the UK (not college/university accommodation), is not regularly involved in travel overseas and can be contacted easily.

If the guardian is out of the country during the school year for a period of any significance, a suitable person must be appointed (with School and parental agreement) to cover the period of absence. The guardian may not be a member of staff at Woldingham School. Where the guardian is an agency and girls may stay with host families, girls are not to be placed with host families which include a member of staff at Woldingham School.

Accommodation for students during exeats and school holidays.

If a student is not travelling home or staying with their own family during an exeat or school holiday, the school will not permit any student to stay somewhere alone/without adult supervision. This includes staying in hotel/youth hostel/Airbnb accommodation, even if it is with parents' consent. This applies to all students, even those over 18 years of age, for safeguarding purposes.

The school reserves the right to decline permission for any exeats arrangements if the school is not entirely happy with the arrangements which are being made as student wellbeing and safety are at the forefront of any decision to decline exeat permission.