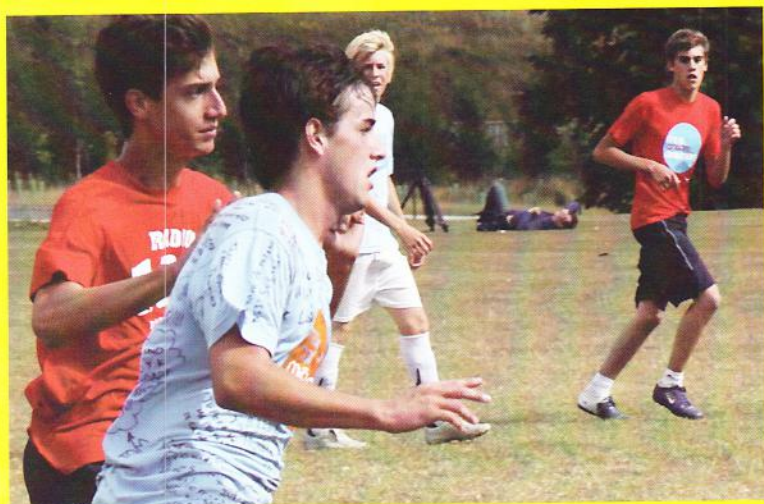


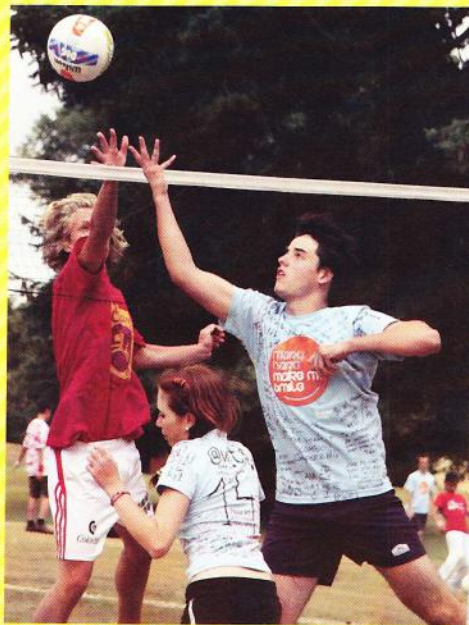
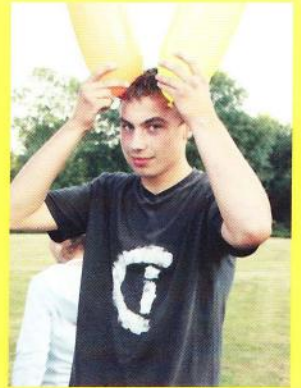
"It's amazing how much 4 weeks
can change your life..."



Residential
English
Language
Courses
11-17 Years

summer 2007

Vacational
Studies®



"prepare for the best
time of your life!"

Residential English language courses

Vacational Studies Courses have been running for 34 years. We have tried in this time to develop an enjoyable balance between 'vacation' and 'study'. Here is our programme for Summer 2007.

the courses

Accredited by the British Council

Vacational Studies is 'Accredited by The British Council' and is a member of English UK – formerly ARELS (The Association of Recognised English Language Services) – a professional body, membership of which is granted only after thorough inspection by The British Council and re-inspection every four years. We were last inspected in 2003 and are Accredited until March 2008.

About this brochure

This is an Information Book. The first part (this section) gives you a factual overview of the work we do, so you can decide if we are right for your youngster. The second part ('News 2006-2007') is written in a different style so you have an idea of my personality which necessarily influences the atmosphere on the Courses. It gives a more detailed rationale of the 2007 Courses and what has shaped them, so you and your son or daughter will be fully informed and can prepare for the experience. If your application is accepted, both sections are essential reading. In particular, 'Unrealisable Expectations' in the second section deals with fundamental issues and must be read.

What we try to do

Vacational Studies tries to create a totally international Course with students from as many different countries as possible. We avoid accepting a large number of students from any particular country. In this way we try to ensure that English is the main medium of communication among the students. By using English not just as a school subject but as a living language, we hope our students will realise better its importance and value. Our students want to use English to make friends. This element of self-motivation greatly increases their fluency.

The emphasis on the practical use of English is combined with a full sports, entertainment and excursion programme helping young people to learn 'English internationally'. But it is more than this...

Residence

The Courses are all fully residential. Students eat, sleep and receive classes in the Schools.

The students

We accept boys and girls – near-beginners, intermediate and more advanced students - aged 11 to 17. Complete beginners are not accepted because they cannot participate in an international community.

The Courses are sports-orientated and encourage good social development in a community situation.

Students who will benefit

Please make sure that our Course is suitable for your child and that he/she wants to come. Those who will benefit and we enjoy having with us will be internationally-minded, interested in English, outgoing, gregarious and able to function independently. They will also be willing to accept the constraints of community living. We consider it so important that our standards and expectations are understood and accepted that we ask parents to confirm that they and their children have read the rules and that they agree to abide by them. A slip sent with the rules is provided for this purpose.

How they will benefit

We hope that our students will learn a great deal of English, make good friendships and develop a positive international feeling. As well as formal study, we concentrate on the holiday aspect of the Course. While we try to involve students in all activities, we naturally respect the wishes of those who like to read quietly or be with friends. Over the years, we have built up an excellent reputation with parents and young people all over the world. Many boys and girls spend several summers with us renewing old friendships and making new ones. Most students come to us on personal recommendation. The numbers on the Courses are deliberately kept quite small so that the staff can get to know everybody and treat each young person as an individual.

Choice of Course

The Courses have the same format. The only differences are location and dates. 2007 dates are:-

Mary Hare	8 July - 5 August 2007	(4 weeks)
Cheam	14 July - 11 August 2007	(4 weeks)



For 2007 we have Courses at Schools near Newbury -
The Mary Hare School and Cheam School. Newbury is a small
country town in a pleasant part of southern England in the
Berkshire Downs. It is 70km west of London and 45km south of
Oxford. The Schools we use are among the best in the area.

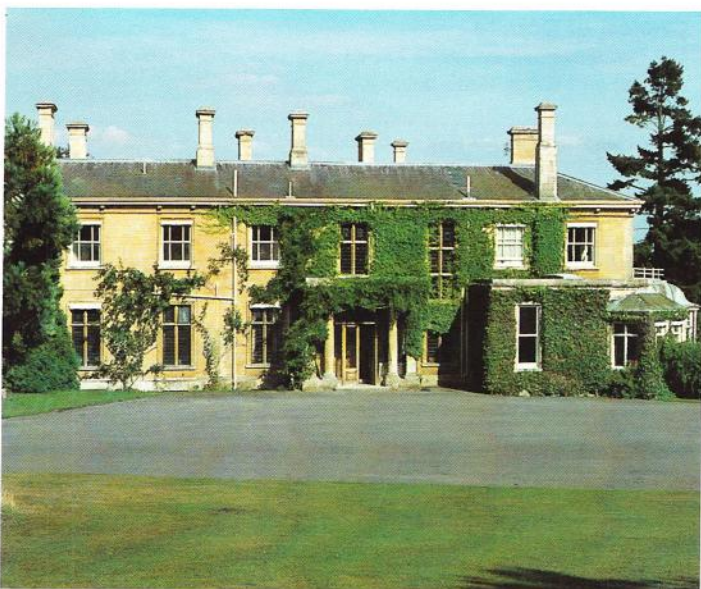
the schools

The Mary Hare School

The Mary Hare School is a campus comprising several buildings that we have used since 1982. Various architectural styles are represented. There are formal gardens and woodland and extensive grounds which include several playing fields, a range of tennis courts, a gymnasium and a large indoor swimming pool.

Cheam School

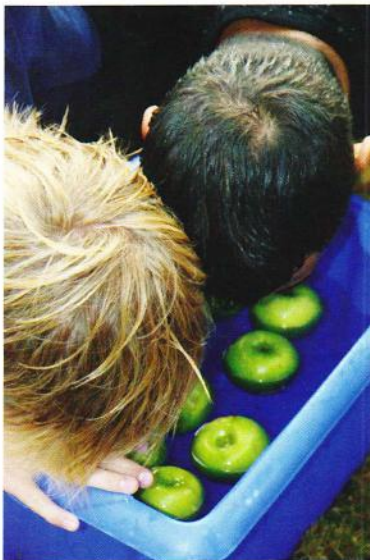
Cheam School is a late nineteenth century mansion that we have used since 1975. A particular feature is the sunken formal garden. The School's large grounds with playing fields, lawns and woods, back onto Watership Down. There is a sports hall/gymnasium and a range of tennis courts. It has an open-air swimming pool.



The Mary Hare School



Cheam School



the programme

The teaching

We use Task-Based Learning. The emphasis in lessons is to help develop the students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills through a topic and task-based approach. This involves working with students on a variety of activities centred on a particular topic and helping them with the language needed to complete the activities. For example, creating a film script; using the script as a basis for language-study; filming the script; editing the film; creating a DVD to take home. The students will be using English as a working language. We try to give students materials and activities that are different from those in their own countries. Oral and written English are taught and there is an emphasis on conversation practice. A prize is awarded on each Course for academic excellence.

A staff of professional teachers with experience of the teaching of English, give 4 lessons, each of 45 minutes, every day except Sunday and excursion days. In addition, there is a 30 minute 'homework' period each afternoon. Classes are graded according to age and ability in English. Students are placed first in an 'assessment group' and complete a range of oral and written tasks, including a formal placement test. The combined results of these tasks together with the teacher's opinion eventually determine placement in a class. Class placements are constantly reviewed and students may be moved to more or less advanced classes, according to their performance. The teacher:student ratio is approximately 1:12. Maximum class size is 16. We provide all books and teaching materials. Course books used include 'Cutting Edge', 'Over to You', 'Reward Intermediate', 'Matters' and 'Panorama 2'.

A Certificate of Attendance is sent at the end of the Course. This Certificate is accepted in some countries as justification for a state bursary. For example, the Italian Ministry of Education has decreed that a Certificate issued by a British Council Accredited School counts towards the Italian School Leaving Certificate. In Monaco, a bursary can be applied for.

Sports

Sport is an important part of the Course. Our Sports/Social Organiser arranges a regular programme including football, basketball, volleyball, baseball, tennis, table-tennis, swimming, etc. Competitions run throughout the Course. There is also 'Sports Day' when the Schools meet for friendly competitions in the major sports.

We take all practicable safety precautions – for example, students using the swimming pool are always supervised by a teacher.

Social activities

We try to create a relaxed and friendly 'family' atmosphere in which young people will feel 'at home' quickly and make good social contacts. There is a variety of non-sporting activities on the programme – games, talent shows, folies bergères, discotheques, barbecues, concerts, optional theatre visits, etc. The programme is a full one. There is always something to do and students are encouraged to participate.

Excursions

There are three days out. We intend one to be to London for sightseeing; another to a designer outlet or town for shopping; the third excursion is to 'Sports Day'. Travel and staff supervision on these excursions are included in the Course Fee. Other excursions can be arranged on request.

A typical day

08.15	Breakfast
09.00	First class
09.45	Break
09.55	Second class
10.40	Break
11.10	Third class
11.55	Break
12.05	Fourth class
12.50	Break
13.00	Lunch
13.45	'Homework'
14.15	Break
14.45	Organised sports and games
18.00	Evening meal
19.00	Games, films, etc.
21.00	Hot chocolate and biscuits
21.30	'Club'
22.30	Bedtime (or 22.45)

Pocket money and stamps are obtainable from the Office every



Shopping afternoons (optional extra)

In addition to the organised excursions (which are included in the Course Fee), there are one or two optional shopping afternoons which are not included in the Course Fee. These are in Newbury or another town near the School. We think it safe for young people to shop in these towns unaccompanied by staff, if parents have indicated their agreement to this on the Application Form. This helps them achieve a measure of independence. Younger students can be accompanied by staff if parents or we so wish. There will be several staff in the town while our students are shopping. Travel is by private coach from the School with accompanying staff. The cost of transport (payable by students if they wish to go) is about £7.

Theatre visits (optional extra)

Tickets for smash-hit West End musicals that are booked out months in advance have been requested and we will be allocated a limited number. Students who apply early enough will be able to see one of these shows. The cost of each (show + travel to the theatre) will be in the range £30-£50. The cost should be added to pocket money.

If it is not possible to provide a ticket, the money will be returned with the student at the end of the Course.

Certification in Spoken English by The Chartered Institute of Linguists (optional extra)

The Chartered Institute of Linguists has been recognised by the British Government as examiners since 1910. Through its subsidiary, IoL Language Services Ltd, they have devised a Certification in Spoken English especially for us, which will be externally marked by their examiners. Certification will be on 5 levels, according to the ability of the student. Level 1 is 'Near-Beginner'; Level 2 is 'Intermediate', Level 3 is 'Upper Intermediate', Level 4 is 'Advanced' and Level 5 is 'Proficiency'. At each level, the procedure will be:- (1) a general conversation with the examiner during which the student is giving information and (2) a structured task in which the student is requesting information. Including preparation time, the examination will last about 20 minutes. It will be held in each school at the end of the Course. The Certificate in English as a Spoken Language for Short Courses is an officially validated qualification awarded in each Level at one of three Grades – Pass; Merit; Distinction. The cost is £50.00.

Certification in written and spoken + written English by The Chartered Institute of Linguists (optional extra)

As an addition to the oral assessments, IoL Language Services Ltd also offers Certification at Level 1+, Level 2+, Level 3+, Level 4+ and 5+ in written English. The cost is £50.00 for Written English and is £75 for Written + Spoken English.

Tennis lessons (optional extra)

Tennis may be played at any time. Lessons are not needed. We can arrange professional lessons, if required, for beginners or near-beginners only. Six one-hour lessons are given in groups of no more than four students. These must be requested in advance on the Application Form. If tennis lessons are taken, a tennis racquet must be brought.

As these lessons are prearranged, it is not possible to refund the cost of lessons booked, but not taken. Parents are asked to make sure that lessons are really wanted before booking them. If tennis lessons are requested, the cost (£40.00) should be added to pocket money.

"I really
miss you!
I hate the
last day."



Here is a typical menu for guidance:-

Breakfast:

Choice of cereal

Choice of various breads, meats, cheese, fruit

Jam, marmalade, other spreads

Tea, coffee, milk, fresh orange juice

Lunch:

Choice of one cold or three hot dishes

Buffet-style salad bar

Choice of desserts

Fresh fruit

Dinner:

Choice of one cold or three hot dishes

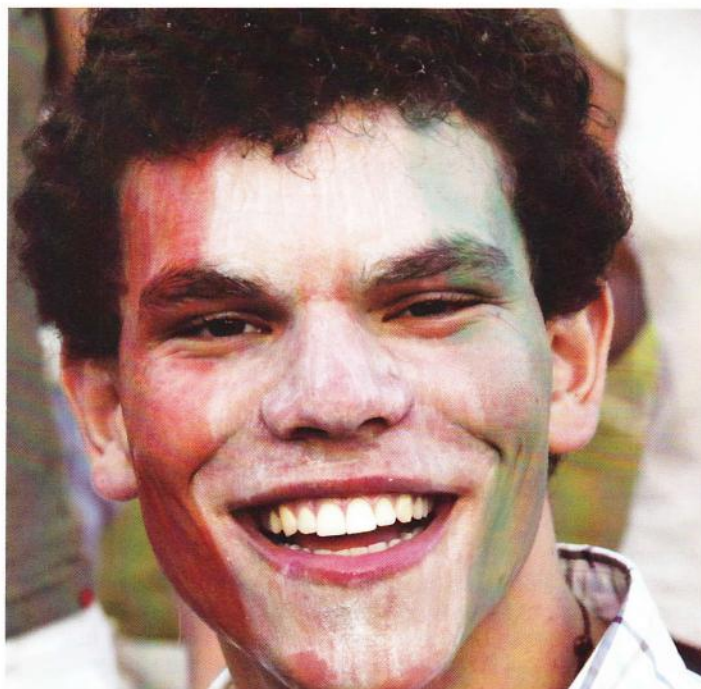
Buffet-style salad bar

Choice of desserts

Fresh fruit

Before bedtime:

Hot chocolate and biscuits



Food safety

Vacational Studies policy is not to serve any food about which there is any concern for any reason. We serve only what we believe parents would feel safe to serve their own children in their own homes.

Meals

Food is an important part of the Course. Meals are prepared by professional caterers to a high standard. Our specification for lunch and dinner is a choice of hot dishes (including one vegetarian) or a cold dish, choice from a salad bar comprising about ten different items, a choice of desserts and fresh fruit. Students can have the first choice they want and can return for another choice as 'seconds'. If they cannot find anything they like, they can ask us to ask the caterer to prepare something special.

There is always a vegetarian option. Other special diets can be catered for. Cold orange juice or other drinks are available at no charge. There is a small 'tuck shop'.

At times throughout the Course, the menu will be varied to include, for example, barbecues (spare rib, hamburger, jacket potatoes, coleslaw dip, crisps, ice-cream, etc.) There will be a traditional British 'Christmas Dinner' (roast turkey with stuffing, roast potatoes, Brussels sprouts, cranberry jelly) and an 'English High Tea' (sandwiches, scones, jam and cream). There may also be 'national meals'. If they wish, students from

various countries can advise the kitchen staff on how to prepare and serve a meal consisting of dishes from their own country.

Any student can join the Food Committee which meets the Caterer regularly to discuss all aspects of the catering.

How we encourage the use of English

On each Course there are students from many different countries. We try to ensure a mixture of nationalities in classes and dormitories. We aim to stimulate the speaking of English socially in various ways. Members of staff constantly encourage English-speaking around the School. We also have at least one native English-speaking student.

We institute a 'House' system at the start of the Course. In each House will be students mixed by nationality, gender and age. Team games are played as House Competitions for House Points. Additionally, House Points are awarded for individual excellence - such as using English socially. House Points can also be deducted. The House with the most Points is awarded a Treat. A Treat can be given at any stage in the Course and another Treat will be given at the end. We intend that the House Points and the Treats that are awarded from these will be positive inducements for participating and an encouragement to use English.

The course fee includes:

- residence at the School
- travel Heathrow-School/School-Heathrow¹
- all meals²
- tuition
- the sports programme
- the use of facilities
- excursions³
- insurance⁴
- the laundering of clothes⁵

The course fee does not include:

- pocket money
- optional church/theatre/shopping visits
- travel to and from England

There are NO EXTRA CHARGES except for optional church, theatre or shopping visits and professional tennis lessons. A deduction of £8 is made from pocket money to provide indoor board games and records, tapes and CDs for the 'Club'. £20 'caution money' will be retained in the student's pocket money account until the last day when it will be returned less deductions for damages (if any).

1 At specified times and terminals - see "Travel"

2 Except lunch on excursions, but including lunch on Sports Day

3 Travel and supervision, not entrance fees

4 As described in the 'Insurance' slip

5 If washable at 40°C+, indelibly named, not sensitive to bulk washing/drying and at your own risk





Health

Minor illnesses are treated by our own staff. There is a Matron in each School. We also use the services of doctors in the locality. The St John's Ambulance Service provides training for all our staff at the start of each Course in the latest methods of basic first aid and resuscitation. We ask parents to give us full health information on the Application Form. We request that those with food allergies come with a 1ml. Adrenalin (Epinephrine) 1:1000 injection pen – an 'EpiPen'. Children of EU/EEA nationality should bring a EHIC (European Health Insurance Card), available from their health service, entitling them as temporary residents to the same free treatment under the British National Health Service as British citizens for all, including pre-existing, conditions.

Religion

The Courses are interdenominational. If parents so wish, we shall arrange for Catholic or other students to attend an appropriate service. Please indicate this on the Application Form. Transportation to and from the church is payable by students.

Residential accommodation

At all Schools, students sleep in dormitories. Girls are in one part of the house, boys are in another.

Insurance

Every student is covered by special Insurance while they are with us. Details are on the enclosed information sheet. Briefly, the Insurance includes refund of full Course Fees if certified serious illness or accident to the student or parent during the month before the Course prevents attendance on the Course; private emergency medical treatment to the value of £1,000,000; personal possessions and luggage cover to the value of £500; personal money cover to the value of £200; return air fare or repatriation to the value of £1,000,000 if an APEX reservation is lost because of delayed or advanced departure through illness or accident while the student is with us. Personal accident insurance is included.

"I can't believe those four weeks passed so fast."

There is no extra charge for this Insurance. Every student is automatically covered (subject to the stated conditions) when the application is accepted.

How we look after students

We understand the concern felt by parents when their sons and daughters are away from home. They are under constant supervision, as far as is practicable, both in the School and on excursions. Our total staff:student ratio of about 1:8 ensures that our students are well looked-after.

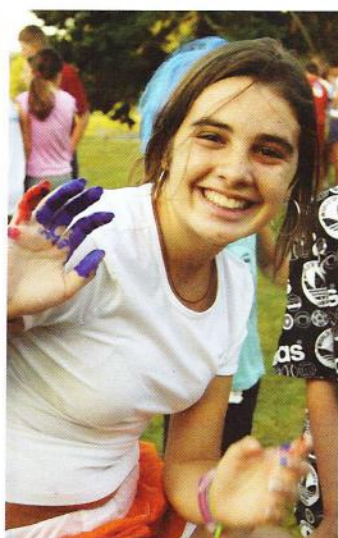
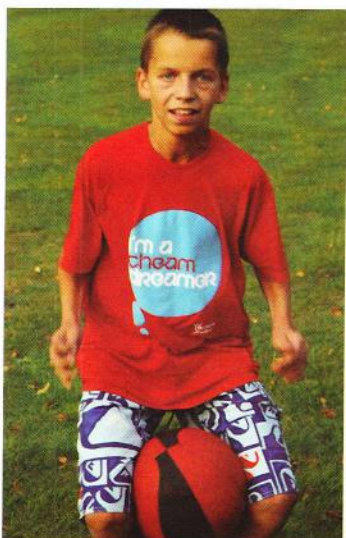
In addition to the staff, on each Course there are one or two older ex-students, 'Staff Helpers', to assist with the sports and entertainment programme. We aim to have at least one native English-speaking student.

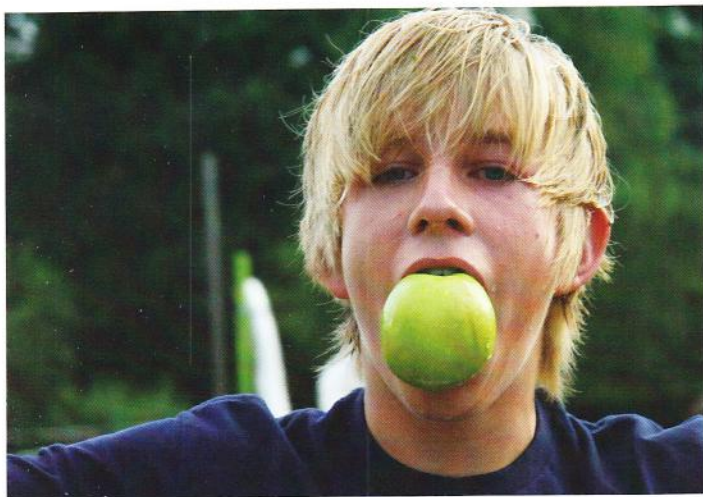
During the Course, progress reports are sent to all parents describing performance in class and also social behaviour. At the end of the Course, all parents are sent a final report and leaving certificate together with a report from the Director on the student's general progress and behaviour.

If there is a problem

We shall contact you. Parents must ensure that we have a telephone number through which they can always be reached. If it is an emergency and we cannot reach you, we shall contact the person named in section 8 (our 'emergency contact') on the Application Form. If we cannot contact either of you, we shall assume your authority to act 'in loco parentis' and in a medical emergency, for example, give consent to appropriate medical treatment. We send students a list of rules and standards of behaviour expected before the Course begins. These are straightforward. Basically, we expect students to obey the law, respect the buildings, equipment and the feelings of other people and to show good manners. Students must read and know the rules before they come.

If a student is correctly motivated (see section on 'Students who will benefit'), there should be no discipline problems. If any should arise, we reserve the right to contact parents and, if we consider it necessary, require that he/she be taken home at the parents' expense without refund of Fees. We also reserve the right to send the writer of the original 'letter of recommendation' a photocopy of any correspondence we enter into.





how to apply

How to apply

Answer all the questions on the Application Form and return it to us with (if this is a first application) a letter of recommendation from the school on behaviour and attitude to study. We shall tell you immediately if the application is acceptable and for which Course. A 'waiting list' operates when the Courses are full.

Letter of recommendation

To ensure that all our students are well-motivated and keen to participate, we ask that a brief letter of recommendation from the school accompanies all applications from new students. This should mention behaviour and attitude to study. No such letter is needed for students we already know or, exceptionally, when this might cause conflict with educational authorities.

When the application is accepted

We shall write to inform you of this and include our Invoice for the Course Fees. The Invoice can be settled in full immediately, or 50% can be paid immediately and the balance by the date shown on the Invoice. The place is confirmed when the full Course Fees have been received by us. We shall also request travel details.

How to pay

Please see the 'Course Fees' slip.

Pocket money

Pocket money can either be brought by students (as cash or a £ cheque drawn on a British bank, payable to 'Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C') or sent in advance to the National Westminster Bank, 30 Market Place, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5AJ in £ Sterling to Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C 65400100 (IBAN number GB19 NWBK 6015 0765 4001 00) or in Euros to Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C 10388494 (IBAN number GB19 NWBK 6072 0610 3884 94). Our BIC number is: NWBK GB 2L. We also have a £ Sterling Girobank account for personal money. The number is 255 7444. We do not recommend an amount, but students will tend to bring about £300. Optional tennis coaching fees, the cost of Certification and the cost of theatre visit(s) should be added (if applicable). Do not send more money during the Course.

Clothes and possessions

Notes and advice on what to bring and other information will be sent to parents and students in advance.

"Thank you so much
again for the
everlasting memories"





travel

Travel

It is quite usual for our students to fly alone. 90% of our students arrive and depart in this way. There are many cut-price air ticket offers. The cheapest tickets are to be found on the airline's web site, NOT by phone and NOT via a travel agent. We operate a collection and return transport service between Heathrow Airport and the Schools on arrival and departure at no charge, subject to the conditions on our 'Travel Details' form. Our staff can meet students arriving at Heathrow Terminals 1 and 2 (only) and check-in students on outgoing flights from Heathrow Terminals 1 and 2 (only) on the stated dates. Our staff are at Heathrow from 12.00-16.00 on arrival days and from 09.30-13.00 on departure days. If flights arrive earlier than 12.00, students wait for our staff near the Information Desk. If flights leave after 13.00, we explain the procedure and take students to wait in the correct area.

For young children (under 12), airlines operate an 'Unaccompanied Young Persons (UYP)' or 'Unaccompanied Minors (UM)' service on request and look after them. As airlines insist on a named person meeting and returning a child and that the person remains until the flight has departed, parents should note that if they request UYP or UM service, all UYP or UM arrivals and departures must be by taxi at cost. The driver is known to us and has been working with us for many years. He will meet students and check them in personally. It is normally unnecessary for students to be booked to fly UYP or UM. Airlines (especially British Airways) are very helpful with young passengers at any age.

Our free standard service cannot be used when arrival is later or departure is earlier than our stated dates or times, or if the flight is via Gatwick, Luton or Stansted, or if a student is booked UYP or UM, or is on a flight which arrives at or departs from Terminal 3 or 4, or is outside our requested times. We can make special taxi or minibus arrangements on your behalf. We do not charge for making these arrangements, but the cost of the taxi or minibus is payable by the student. (As a guide, a one-way taxi for one person to Heathrow is about £90 and to Gatwick about £110. For two or more people, the cost is shared). Special requirements should be indicated on the Application Form and details sent separately.

At the airport

Before travelling, we send an identity badge and luggage tags to ensure quick recognition. Our representatives will carry blue 'Vacational Studies' folders and will meet students at the entrance to the Arrivals Hall after leaving the Customs Hall.

If you do not take our standard collection/return service, but we make other arrangements for you, the same procedure applies.

Visits to the schools

Visits to the Schools outside the Course dates may be made only by appointment through our Newbury Office.

If you come by car

Road directions are given after the Schools' addresses. Parents bringing students are asked to arrive at between 12.30 and 14.30. Parents collecting students on the last day are asked to arrive before 11.00.

On arrival at the school

All money is handed in at the Office for safe keeping. Students can withdraw money every day. We keep passports and tickets safely. We cannot accept responsibility for pocket money or valuables not handed to us.

On the first day

On request, students will be allocated to a returning student who will act as a guide, explaining the layout of the building, the way the Course runs and answering any questions.

"I hope we keep
in touch and never
forget all of our
friends all over
the world"



The Mary Hare School

From London, follow M4 to Exit 13 (Newbury). Leave M4 and immediately follow signs to 'Donnington'. Continue for 2 kms. The Mary Hare School is signposted on the right.

Address for students' letters:

The Mary Hare School, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 3BQ.

Telephone (to contact Course Manager):

National: (01635) 244221

International: +44 1635 244221

Payphone (for students):

National: (01635) 244261

International: +44 1635 244261

Cheam School

From Newbury, take the A339 road (signposted 'Basingstoke') for 10km into Headley village. Cheam School (South Entrance) is signposted on the right.

Address for students' letters:

Cheam School, Headley, Newbury, Berkshire RG19 8LD.

Telephone (to contact Course Manager):

National: (01635) 267814

International: +44 1635 267814

Payphone (for students)

National: (01635) 268225

International: +44 1635 268225

The telephone numbers and addresses given above are only for use during the Courses. During the rest of the year, please use our Newbury Office address and telephone numbers below.

Directions by rail

By train from London, leave from Paddington Station. Arrive at Newbury Station. There are normally taxis at Newbury Station. If not, there are taxi numbers in the phone box near the Station.

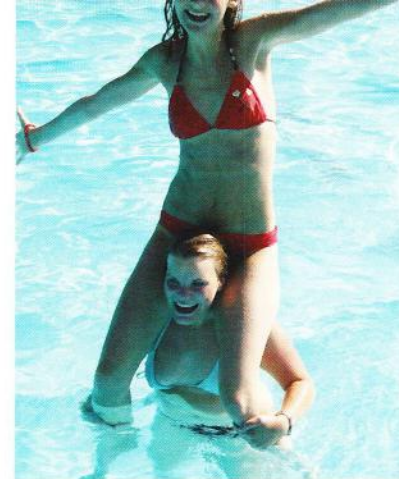
Schools' addresses and directions



Finally

We have tried to describe the Courses fully and frankly. Please also see the section 'Unrealisable Expectations' in the News Section. The News Section contains more detailed information on various aspects of the Course. It is essential reading for the parents of Course participants and is not only a résumé of the previous summer. We hope this brochure contains all the information you need to make your choice. Any further details you may require can be obtained from the parents of our past students and past students themselves (the addresses of some of these are on the enclosed list) and the Director. We suggest you contact our 'parental references' as they may offer useful advice.

Our Courses are designed with the benefit of years of experience and we are confident that we can combine the learning of good written and spoken English with an unforgettable and enjoyable holiday.



news – summer 2006

Excellent, impeccable, brilliant!' (letter from a Norwegian parent); 'I really enjoyed the lessons.' (letter from an Italian student); 'This is really a special dream, not like another normal study/travelling organisation' (a Norwegian student in the Messages Forum); 'Thank you students for sharing with me this experience, these emotions and for being by my side every time I needed you. Thank you teachers and Sports and Social staff members for the excellent range of activities developed through those four weeks. And finally, thank you Mr. Mucklejohn for the perfect Course I was in. I miss every single person' (a Portuguese student in the Messages Forum); 'It has been the best month of my life. I can't believe that yesterday we were all together and now we are all alone at home. I hope we keep in touch and never forget all of our friends all over the world. IGM, I want to thank you for organising these summer camps, because I have spent the best summers of my life at VacStuds and I'll always remember my summer home' (a Spanish student in the Messages Forum); 'You who are going to come next year, prepare for the best time of your life!' (a German student in the Messages Forum); 'He's now very aware that, no matter which country you call home or language you speak, people everywhere are very similar. This important lesson can often take a lifetime to learn, but to grasp this in a month with VacStuds is simply fantastic' (an e-mail from UK parent); 'I really miss you! I hate the last day - everyone crying - but I realise it is another moment of the month when you know how much you love the people you've met during the best four weeks of your life. At first I thought this month couldn't be as good as last year but then every single person in the Course made me feel very happy to be there. It's what makes me go year after year' (a Spanish student in the Messages Forum); 'Thank you so much again for the everlasting memories and the wonderful opportunity you gave me and everyone who had the chance to take part in VacStuds! I see the people who just got back from VacStuds being more and more enthusiastic every year!' (an Italian student from years back in the Messages Forum); 'Thank you for this wonderful month!' (a Hungarian student in the Messages Forum); 'I can't be one summer at home or in another place!' (a Spanish student in the Messages Forum); 'I believe that this has been an experience that will stay with him the rest of his life' (an American parent).

A Course at Vacational Studies is a profound experience for a young person. For parents, it is a huge investment of money and time. For me, it is a year's work to get everything right. It takes four weeks to capitalise on the release of linguistic inhibitions and create the international community in which English is the natural language to use. It takes four weeks to create the emotional involvement which makes this the investment that can never be taken away. I have tried all the permutations - two weeks, three weeks, six weeks. Four weeks is the right duration; the perfect duration; the only duration.

This year was the last for the student who has been with us the longest – eight summers. As she said to us – Vacational Studies has been an unforgettable part of her life. She came as a small Russian child and leaves an articulate young woman with superb English and contacts all over the world. Students from the 1970s are now sending their children to us to have the same fantastic time they had; a developmental, emotional and linguistic experience that is a real stepping-stone out of the world of childhood into young adulthood. For the past 35 years it has been a privilege for me to be part of this.

So what was special about the summer of 2006? Please read on...

Summer 2006

It was hot, hot, hot. Britain became sub-tropical this July. The students bronzed. So did the grass. By the time the weather broke, we were desperate for the rain, even though it coincided with Sports Day.

After a stint at Cheam as teacher, then Sports/Social Organiser, then Course Manager, I knew that Tom O'Sullivan would have a powerful impact on Mary Hare 2006. A natural leader and born teacher, Tom was simply first-class and won everyone's respect, even those who needed disciplinary measures taken. Each year there is something new. This year was no exception. In every action measured and considerate, he was easy for me to work alongside and I had complete confidence in his ability to deal with any situation. On the teaching side, we had Emma Greenhalgh back for her second year with us as Course Tutor and Assistant Course Manager. Judicious, organised and thoroughly competent, she led a team of first-time teachers working with, for many of them, a totally new teaching concept – Task-Based Learning. That such impressive results were achieved in the classrooms is largely down to the lead she gave the team – Allyson Ashfield, Karolina Barski, Steve Dewsbury, Emma Jessett, Jon Naylor, Joe Wallis – each of whose strengths came to the fore. Arguably the most crucial appointment is that of Sports/Social Organiser. New to it all was Alex O'Connor. After just a few days, he seemed to be like the oldest of old hands. Committed and absolutely straightforward, Alex gave a new twist to old favourite activities and, by his participation, encouraged every student to give 100%. Dressed in his best suit, he gave a deliberately execrable performance in 'Pop Idol', was slated by the panel and cheered to the rafters by the students. An excellent S/SO. His team was splendid, too. Easy-going Rob Hedge, having been a student at Elstree, had his third summer with us as an Assistant, as did the organised and inventive George Cockburn. In the absence of a Staff Helper (as no one really suitable came forward) I augmented the Assistants. New to us were the ever-cheerful and delightful Anneka Beswick and the ever-unshaven James Sutherland. Both were fully involved and super value. Back again for a fifth summer, making sure everything ran smoothly behind the scenes was the ever-efficient Bettina Watson – a veritable minefield of information for me. The students were, on average, younger at Mary Hare this year – quicker to become involved – and the Course was the better for it, especially following the removal of two or three whose standards of behaviour fell far short of what was expected. The prize for academic excellence was awarded to George

"I believe that this has been an experience that will stay with him the rest of his life."

Nunes (Portugal); for English-speaking to Maria Chtepa (Switzerland); for all-round performance to George Mnatsakanov (Russia).

It's unusual for us to employ an American. It's unheard of for us to invite an American back for a second time. That Joe Littenberg was not only invited back, but was offered the Course Managership speaks volumes for him. His role as Assistant Course Manager last year called on all his skills of tact and ability to pick up pieces. This time, he could give the Course his own ethos and he knew that, should a problem arise, he could share the moment with me. There were very few. With a number of high-powered, experienced returning staff, all aspects of Cheam ran smoothly. Emma Christopherson requested to be considered for and was appointed to the post of Assistant Course Manager. Course Tutor once again was Sarah Robinson, back for a fourth summer. She used her talents to get the best out of a largely new teaching staff dealing with a very new teaching programme of which more later. Brian Hogan was back for a second time, Hannah Taylor, James Rogerson, Helen Delingpole and Brynn Bird were all new. Peter Jacob, an Assistant last summer, was invited back as Sports/Social Organiser and fully justified my confidence in him. His attention to detail ensured that the events were characterised by a certain 'Cheam style' and carried off with panache. He thought through and used to good effect the skills of the Crew – returnees Jenny McLoughlin and Andy Kelly and newcomers Phil Stavri and Jamie Winder. Lara Santos returned as Staff Helper par excellence, organising Club and hot chocolate at the same time as helping all the students enjoy and gain the most from their summer experience. If only we could clone her. Anna Ward-Pritchard was Matron. The students loved Cheam and by-and-large were worthy of our trust in them. There may be some Staff Helpers-in-waiting among them. The 20 students whose stay was lengthened by a few days because of the disruption to check-in at UK airports had a great time thanks to Joe, Jenny and Andy who volunteered to stay on. Nick Dann was so kind as to carry on catering until his own holiday began and thereafter I enjoyed being in the kitchen. The prize for academic excellence was awarded to Masha Yakovleva (Russia); for English-speaking to Sur Hee Pom (South Korea); for all-round performance to Natalie Becker (Germany).

Appearing at both schools was our new and charismatic Support Teacher, Thea O'Connor, often to be seen wearing a policeman's helmet. For the twenty sixth summer, tennis coaching was given by Liz Fidler. As for the last twenty or so years, Mark Thatcher's 'MAT 1' discos provided the weekly bop, although we rang the changes and tried out 'Apollo 2'. It is likely that we shall try a variety of different discos in 2007. My 5 year-old sons, Piers, Lars and Ian, came at the weekends. They will be joining Cheam's 'pre-Prep' department in September 2006 as pupils. I am sure they will expect the School to be just as it is when it is 'Daddy's Cheam' in the summer, full of different nationalities saying 'give me five'. And then there was me. I visited each school several times a day praising, admonishing, checking, filming and photographing, dispensing justice like a deus ex Mercedes and loving every moment, of course.

Preparing for 2007

In the 2006 'News-Section', I mentioned that editing the 'Vacational Studies All Over Again' DVDs gives me the opportunity to recollect in tranquillity all the moments that have shaped our students' experiences. Summers with us are, I know, developmental experiences for everyone who comes. They need to be positive in every way. From the students' perspective, I am confident that they were. As the leader in the field of

proactive and see the future in the instant. There were major changes to the teaching and managerial aspects of both Courses. Managerial staff with several years of VacStuds' experience were appointed and the entire teaching programme was revised.

The new teaching programme

I appointed Tom Leighton as Director of Studies and put him through a DELTA Course. He came back with some 'cutting-edge' educational ideas. For the 2006 Courses 'Task-Based Learning' was introduced. As one 'task', each class worked on the creation of a TV programme on DVD from the writing of the film script, to the actual filming through the creation of the graphics to the editing of the finished version on computer. The second 'task' was the creation of a published magazine. Hugely popular with students, this was draining for the staff and will be revised for 2007 so that there should be just one task and a little more emphasis, especially for those students used to a conventional approach to English teaching in their own schools, on grammar.

Sports day

During our summer of drought, the one day of rain was forecast to be 31 July, the day planned as Sports Day. The weather forecast that morning showed a menacing cloud with raindrops hanging over West Berkshire. I switched to the Tuesday. The rainfall was negligible, but the Tuesday was far better with golden sun and blue skies. Tom O'Sullivan was determined to make Sports Day 2006 the day of friendly rivalry that I have always wished for while not detracting from the sheer enthusiasm of the tribal chants. A big 'Welcome Cheam' banner greeted the visitors to Mary Hare this time and lightened the tone from the start. The songs were sung and the patriotism was still palpable, but good humour predominated. Each School performed its song and dance to appreciative audiences and I was happy that I had, at last, agreed to a joint disco that evening. It rounded the day off perfectly. Students from both Schools embraced as the bus drove off that night. It was far and away the happiest Sports Day ever.

Catering

Catering at Mary Hare was again by their Catering Manager, Moira Atkinson. She and her staff did everything to make each meal an event. They decorated the room and tables for all the special dinners. We even had a chocolate fountain for the Valentines Day dinner and a witches cauldron for Halloween. I enjoyed all my meals there. Sodexo catered at Cheam again with Nick Dann in charge. He provided the same menu as that enjoyed by Cheam students during the year. He was always obliging and did his best to accede to students' requests. Each School had its Food Committees, but they had little to comment on this time and the catering ran smoothly.

The British students

I think Vacational Studies is the only summer EFL organisation to include British students. Indeed, I do not see how a Course can be truly international without Britain being represented. We had students from Norwich School and, for the second year, from Reading School. Ali Sims and Olly Davidson were at Mary Hare and Hugh Irving and Peter Yu were at Cheam. When I was in Texas, I interviewed Alexander Coxe and decided to have the US represented, too. The experiment was successful and will be repeated if we have the right applicant. The Course Tutors organised the boys' time so that they were put to good use by the teachers as learning resources. Hugh Irving was awarded The Jörg Weise Trophy for his outstanding contribution to the international aims of the Course.

Looking after young people

I believe that the relationship between ourselves and the parents of children in our care is a partnership. We want all our young people to get the most out of the experience. For this reason, I have written a 'Parental Control Condition' into the contract we have with parents. In brief, I say 'We do our best to fulfil our 'duty of care' under English law based on goodwill and the trust established by your and your child's agreement to the 'rules' as evidenced by the signed 'Agreement and Travel Details' form. If we think a problem is likely to arise, we shall try to contact you before it does so it can be prevented. Nevertheless, if your child's attitude or behaviour is such that we find we cannot exercise the control required to fulfil our 'duty of care', we shall pass responsibility for control to the parent either by requesting the parent's presence or by telephone contact with the child. If this fails and we decide the child is beyond control, we shall expel.'

In effect, this means that, if we sense that a student has problems that are likely to result in trouble, we contact the parent before real trouble results. We contacted parents on a few occasions this year, mainly in connection with problems of adjustment. In every case we had 100% support. The parents talked to their children in a rational way in their own language and

about the inclusion of these words we are de facto in loco parents in the summer. We accept responsibility for looking after a large number of other people's children. We take this responsibility seriously. Parents trust us to make wise decisions. Sometimes, however, we receive requests which we consider unwise. For example, we are asked to let children be unaccompanied by staff when we consider they are not responsible enough to be unaccompanied. Children feel that, if they ask their parents to request something from us, we must comply with a parental request. We are the ones closest to what is happening. We know what a prudent parent would do and would not do in certain circumstances. Legally, we are expected to fulfil the role of a prudent parent – no more, no less. Sometimes we do not agree with what a parent is asking us to do. We shall use our discretion in all matters. Under English Law a parent may not sign away a child's rights. This includes the child's right to be protected by adults. We shall do what we think is right for the child. This is why I state that English Law applies.

Unrealisable expectations

It is important that all parents read this paragraph. We do what we can to encourage students to learn and use the Course to advantage. We do our best to look after them. We make no other claims. We cannot force a child to integrate. While we provide encouragement, they must help themselves. They will find others who speak their language and they may be tempted to take the easy way. They may come with friends from home. We cannot keep friends apart when they are at the same School. They must decide to broaden their international horizons, mix and use English. Parents may make requests, but we reserve the right to place students in what we consider to be appropriate classes and dormitories. The final report we write will be our frank assessment. As the teaching/learning situations are different, it may not be similar to the school report you are accustomed to. The Course is a communal experience. Individual freedom is restricted. Our school buildings are boarding schools – not hotels. Accommodation, washrooms, etc. are shared. Bedrooms are boarding school dormitories and these may be sparsely furnished. The schools we use are country houses adapted for use as boarding schools. Bathrooms may be away from dormitories and rotas for their use are sometimes needed. Clothes storage space may be limited. All sorts of compromises have to be made, but for most young people this is part of the fun. We also ask parents to accept that telephone contact with their children, especially in the first few days, is not a good idea. We ask that mobile phones are not brought. We are not being difficult, just putting into practice what we know from experience works. In effect, what we are requesting is a partnership between us based on our expertise and parents' trust in us. What we provide and the parameters of what we permit are in our literature. We act on the assumption that parents and students read it all. If your child is interested in drinking, smoking, going out at night and leading an independent life, please choose another organisation less restrictive than ours. We assume that parents will be realistic about their children. We exercise due control, but they have the freedom to do things that are wrong. If they do, there are repercussions outlined in the 'Notes'. We do what we can to prevent rule-breaking, but if it happens, parents must accept that it is occasioned by their child's free will, not lack of control on our part.

I can put it into context. Ours is a new, exciting and active environment. Parental control appears absent. Our students are a long way from home, without the constraints and responsibilities that tend to check behavioural

students may indulge in behaviour that is simply and socially they get caught, they may feel they have little to lose. Protected by this feeling that no one of importance will ever know, I am aware that some students have broken our rules and even the law. All students come to us after a 'letter of recommendation' has been written about them by their school. To remove this feeling of anonymity and to encourage students to take responsibility for their own actions, we write frank reports to parents. We reserve the right to send the writer of the original 'letter of recommendation' a photocopy of any correspondence we have with parents about children in our care.

Phoning students

The students who adjust best are those whose parents phone them only on the two 'Telephone Sundays'. If these parents wish to know how their child is adjusting, they phone the Course Manager and ask.

There are some parents who feel they must speak to their children frequently. We ask parents who must speak to their children outside 'Telephone Sundays' to phone the payphone, not our School Office number. We cannot search for children in a large building and campus. The payphone may ring unanswered. A student may answer it. If so, that student can be asked to search for a student. That student may or may not comply with the request.

Mobile phones

These are a fact of life. They are not useful in the context of the Course. The time young people spend with us develops their sense of independence. They need to be able to cope with small challenges on their own. An immediate call home at the first sign of a challenge delays adjustment. For 2007 we shall not allow mobile phones to be used for the first week. In line with UK Government Education Department advice on the possible health hazard for young people of microwaves near the brain in an enclosed environment, we do not permit students to use mobile phones inside the school. We prefer that a mobile phone is not brought. Any mobile phone brought must be kept in the office and used outdoors. We accept no responsibility for loss of or damage to mobile phones that are brought. Any mobile phone kept other than in the office will be removed.

Trips

In addition to the three trips we arrange and which are included in the Fee, we can arrange other trips – such as visits to the cinema, paintballing and bowling – on request. We make the transport and staffing arrangements. We obtain group rates where possible and just pass on the charges with no mark-up. In these days of security alerts, we shall take all precautions and, if necessary, change our programme depending on circumstances.

Theatre visits

Most students request a visit to the theatre. They are asked to choose which show they wish to see in order of preference on a form which shows the Invoice number. The earlier the application, the lower the Invoice number. Tickets are allocated by Invoice number. The lower the Invoice number, the greater the chance of getting one's choice of theatre visit. 2007 Invoice numbers start at 12893. A 'Theatre Visits' choice list will be sent out in March or later.

"It has been
the best
month of
my life."





Property

We ask that valuable items (including expensive clothes) are not brought. All items with a used re-sale value over £40 must nevertheless be listed on the 'Valuable Possessions' form. At the end of the Courses we send back every named item of property left behind. Un-named items are also returned if we have a good idea to whom they belong. We can keep items in our office on request. While they are safer in our office than elsewhere, we accept responsibility only for items stored in our safe. These items can be given to us on request. They are kept in the safe for the duration of the Course and not removed at any time. Property not in our safe and lost other than when in the student's possession on a trip is not covered by the Insurance policy we include as part of the Course Fee. We accept no responsibility for mobile phones.

Health & EHIC

All students are entitled to free emergency treatment under the Medical Insurance policy included in the Course Fee for illnesses or accidents that happen in Britain. EU and EEA residents are entitled to free treatment under the National Health Service for illnesses or accidents that happen in Britain. Pre-existing conditions are not covered by our insurance. No one (not even an EU or EEA resident) is entitled to free treatment under the NHS for a pre-existing condition unless they have an EHIC (European Health Insurance Card). EHICs were introduced on 1 June 2004 and are available from Social Security or Health Department offices overseas. If an overseas Social Security or Health Department office states that an EHIC is not needed because free treatment for a pre-existing condition is available for anyone in the EU or EEA on a short stay, that advice is wrong and the office should contact Mr Ineneji at the Department of Health on +44 20 7210 5318 for confirmation. If they have a pre-existing condition and do not have an EHIC, students should have their own medical insurance.

VacStuds DVD

'VacStuds 2006 All Over Again' has been edited and sent to those requesting it. For those students wishing to relive the summer and for those parents trying to find out what made it 'the best summer of my life', here is an instant walk down Memory Lane. Parents of 2007 students who would like a preview can request a copy.

Before and during the course

Parents are welcome to contact me on any matter. In July and August I tend to be at my desk from 08.00 (English time) until 10.00 and then I travel around the schools. For practical reasons, therefore, it is best to make contact with me during the Courses via the Course Manager. Just before the Course, I send each parent 'last minute' information with my GSM phone number. For information, this is +44 7717 007 007.

Staff helpers

Traditionally, we have a male and/or a female former student on each Course as unpaid helpers, providing a link between staff and students. They tend to be 18-21 and to have left a gap of one summer after being a student. SHs are chosen early in the new year. Potential SHs should contact me before Christmas. If 'leadership potential' or an equivalent phrase is mentioned in my letter accompanying the final report, this

After the course

Please feel you can contact me about anything connected with Britain. For example, parents ask for my advice on continuing their children's education in Britain. I am happy to help. No charge! I see this as a natural extension of my work with young people. Students ask for information, sometimes ten or twenty years later. No problem!

Vacational Studies trade mark

For some years, our clever logo has been registered as a trade mark. Now, after over three decades, we have been allowed to register the actual words Vacation Studies as a trade mark.

The Jörg Weise Association

This exists to encourage international understanding. Occasionally its Trophy is awarded for an outstanding contribution to the international aims of the Course. Details are on www.vacstuds.com/JWA.

GIOTTO

This enables our students to keep in touch with friends from when they were students with us and to make new contacts for social or professional purposes. Details are on www.vacstuds.com/GIOTTO.

Vacational Studies Foundation

The Vacation Studies Foundation was registered as a Charity under English Law in January 2000 to assist talented young people. Details are on www.vacstuds.com/FOUNDATION.

H.T.W. Mucklejohn

My beloved father, who was Company Secretary from the founding of Vacation Studies until his death in 2003, was a great support to me. I miss him very much. In his memory, the Jörg Weise Association has donated in perpetuity a full Scholarship which I am able to award when I come across a young person who would benefit from our Courses, but cannot apply for financial reasons. If you know one, tell me.

Au-pair possibility...

My three sons will be six years-old in 2007. I may look for an au-pair (female or male) to help me with them and give them an international perspective. This could be a rather special opportunity for someone to live and work in the UK with all the linguistic benefits that would accrue.

My thanks

...to all those who trusted me to give their children the time of their life this summer. This really is the investment that can never be taken away. Those who have been to us and their parents will know that 'come to Vacation Studies and change your life' is as true now as it was in 1973.

And finally...

For those who are interested, my second book about my adventures ('And Then There Were Three - Expanded Edition' (ISBN 1903933730)) was published in June 2006 and is available inter alia via www.amazon.com.

Ian Mucklejohn – who, as the Director, co-ordinates the Schools – was born in London. He is a graduate of the University of London with an Honours Degree in English Language and Literature, is an Associate of the College of Preceptors and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He has had many years experience in teaching. He is a published writer. He is the founder of Vacational Studies and has three six year-old sons of his own.

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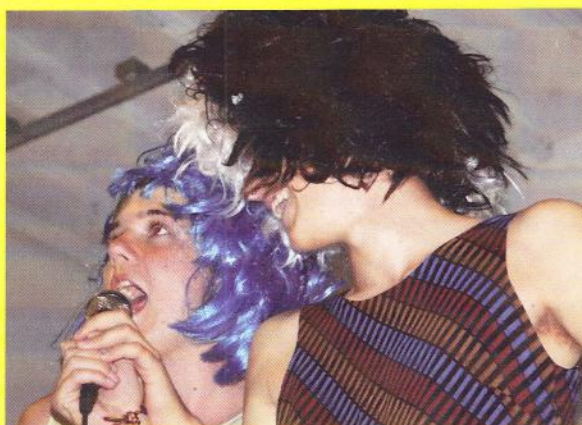
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