

notes for parents 2027

Days I'll remember all my life™

These 'Notes' and the 'Notes for Students' are important and must be kept for reference. Please read them BOTH and ask your son or daughter to read them, too. Then sign and return to us the 'Agreement and Travel Details' form before 6 June.

Vacational
Studies

Parents' (Password-Protected) Page at vacationalstudies.com

Parents are sent the password after enrolment. The Parents' Page is essential and updated regularly.

Recent information

Let us have any information not included on the Application Form, such as recent illness or events that may have a bearing on behaviour.

Motivation

Just before coming, please talk to your child about why he/she is coming on the Course and stress just how important it is to speak English, mix with the other nationalities and join in the activities.

Travel/Arrival/Departure

We need all travel information (only on the 'Agreement and Travel Details' form duly completed and signed) before 6 June. Names of staff at Heathrow Airport on 11 July and 7 August will be provided on the Parents' (Password-Protected) page on vacationalstudies.com after 1 March.

Departure from the school on 7 August must be before 13.00. Our tenure ends and we hand the school back to its owners at this time.

We believe parents give the correct flights and times and we act on the information we receive. We confirm the flight details we believe have been given and ask parents to check our accuracy. We trust parents to ensure that all paperwork has been completed correctly and that passengers are allowed to travel. We cannot be responsible for uncorrected errors, omissions or incomplete paperwork.

Pocket money

When calculating the amount of pocket money to give your child, take into account that it is not just for spending money. It is also in case of emergencies - a taxi on arrival or departure or to the doctor, for example - and to cover entrance fees on trips. Please remember to add to the pocket money total the cost of the options you have requested. Tell your child that the cost of these options will be taken out of pocket money. You may wish to give your child a debit card. If pocket money is being brought, it should be as a £ cash (£50 notes) for the total of the pocket money + options + taxi charges, if applicable. Do not send non-UK currency such as euro, a cheque or travel cheques. Do not send a cheque made out to your child. Include all money needed. Do not send more money during the Course. Tell your child no more money will be sent. All pocket money (and anything else requiring to be kept safely) must be handed in to the Office on arrival. We cannot be responsible for anything not handed in or valuables not in our safe. £8 will be taken from pocket money as a subscription to the 'Club' to buy disco equipment and extras. We shall retain £20 in the pocket money account until the last day when it will be returned less deductions for damages (if any). If you wish a limit to be placed on spending money, please inform us. Students will tend to bring £350 or more pocket money. We think this is too much. We pass on this figure just for information. It is not a recommendation. Increasingly, children are carrying bank cards instead of cash.

Luggage

We do laundry, so pack for one week. **BRING ONLY ONE SUITCASE AND ONE CABIN-BAG.** Complete our luggage tags and put them on both bags. The case must have a lock. If it uses keys, give one to your child (on the Vacational Studies key fob) and tape one into the document wallet we provide. The baggage limit is 20 kg. Do not exceed this as excess baggage charges on the return may be more than your child's pocket money. For security reasons, electrical items and liquids should be put in cabin baggage, not hand baggage. As suitcases look alike, place a large sticker by the handle so that yours can be instantly recognised. In case of lost luggage, pack some essential equipment and clothes, towel and toiletries in hand baggage.

What to bring

IN THE ONE (MAX 20 KGS) SUITCASE include a check-list of items packed. We take no responsibility for any item left behind at the end of the Course. We provide bed-linen. We do not provide towels. Pack an alarm clock. As we don't allow mobile phones, pack a camera and a non-internet-connected wristwatch. Also pack sun cream. All clothes must be named. Sewn-on tapes are best, otherwise iron-on labels or a laundry marker pen. Initials are not sufficient. We wash students' clothes if they are named. We will not wash un-named clothes. Students must wash un-named or delicate clothes themselves. Pack casual clothes not sensitive to bulk laundering. We bulk machine-wash clothes (at your risk) and cannot be responsible for clothes that cannot be machine washed (at 40°) or tumble-dried. We do the laundry twice a week. Jeans are washed once a week. Include one set of formal clothes; warm pullovers; an anorak or raincoat; slippers; sports shoes; at least three towels (one large); clothes hangers; a 'universal adaptor' for electrical apparatus; a phone charger; soap or shower gel; a dictionary; a pen; a tennis racquet and table-tennis bat (if needed) and shin pads (for football). As there will be a 'Fancy Dress' disco, you may like to pack something appropriate. 'Formal clothes' (jacket and tie or dress) are needed for some events. We provide a T-shirt in the House colour. We have a 'Folies Bergère' so, if your child has a talent or interest and might wish to perform, please pack appropriate equipment (guitar, etc.) We can keep these safely in the Office. Otherwise, valuables should not be brought. Please name your child's phone charger.

Identity badge

On the reverse side, write your home telephone number, the School telephone number 07505 911 896 and my mobile number 07717 007 007. We need to see the badge at the Airport for recognition. It helps if it is worn for the first few days at the School.

Health problems, allergies

In the case of allergy to pillow filling, pack a suitable pillow. If enuresis is suspected, tell us and pack a mattress cover. If medicines are being taken, tell your child to give these to Matron on arrival. Students with allergies and reactions to nuts and certain fruits must carry a 1ml. Adrenaline (Epinephrine) 1:1000 injection pen (EpiPen).

Contact by telephone

Please try to telephone your child only on the two telephone Sundays. You may telephone your child (on your child's mobile phone) on two specified Sundays from 10.00 to 13.00 English time (one hour later than Europe and Scandinavia, except Portugal). +44 7812 577 336 is for the Course Manager who will be happy to speak to you about your child. It's best if you phone in the morning. In an emergency, we can bring your child to the phone. If there is a problem, we shall contact you immediately. Students can telephone out any day after the first three days between 21.00 and 22.00, if the permission of the Course Manager has been obtained. We do not encourage this as we think that they have more to do than spend long periods making international calls.

Mobile phones and wi-fi devices

The use of a mobile phone can delay integration and cause homesickness. Airlines require that young passengers bring a mobile phone to communicate with the staff meeting them, if necessary. Mobile phones must be kept in the office and used outside on trip days only. Batteries may only be charged by us in the Office. We disclaim liability for loss, damage or unauthorised use. For day-to-day use on the Course, we do not permit any device that contains a SIM card (even if the SIM card is removed), or connects to the internet, or uses wi-fi, so an alternative music-playing device and camera should be brought.

Has your child arrived safely?

Please assume that he/she has arrived safely if you do not hear from us.

By all means telephone us

Call us, if you like, to find out how your child is. The Course Manager will be pleased to give you a frank assessment. Telephone the Course Manager (+44 7812 577 336) in the morning for preference. You can also call Paddy Douglass on +44 7505 911 896.

In an emergency

Contact +44 7505 911 896, +44 7812 577 336 or my mobile phone +44 7717 007 007.

Going away?

If you are going away from home, please let us have your holiday address and telephone number. If we cannot contact you on holiday, we shall use the emergency contact in Section 7 unless you advise us of an alternative.

Write to students at the School (NOT our Newbury Office)

We know you are used to writing to our Office address, but the students are staying at the School, not at our Office... The School's address is VacStuds at Cheam School, Newbury GB-RG19 8LD. Communicate with your child by letter or by phone on 'Telephone Days', not by e-mail.

Birthdays

We arrange a birthday card and cake for a birthday. You can send a gift in advance for presentation on the day and arrange a phone call for a special day via the Course Manager.

Friends or relatives in Britain?

If you wish friends or relatives to contact your child during the Course, we are happy to agree to the occasional visit. If your child wishes to visit friends, we insist that the child be collected from and returned to the School. For reasons of security, we do not allow contact with people unknown to your child unless we have written approval from parents.

Discipline

We believe that young people appreciate fair and reasonable discipline.

We also assume that parents send their children to us on this understanding. The 'Notes for Students' are designed to ensure that our international community functions harmoniously. All students must read and know the 'Notes' before they arrive.

If your child has a discipline problem

By 'discipline problem', we mean behaviour which is against our rules and/or which we consider sufficiently serious to affect our authority in running the Course. In general, our students are well-behaved, but we must have sanctions for everyone's benefit. For example, because of the co-

educational nature of the Course, we do not allow students out of bed after lights-out unless it is solely a visit to the lavatory. We do not allow boys in the girls' dormitories or girls in the boys' dormitories at any time. We do not permit sexual activity or the possession of items to facilitate this. We will not tolerate any form of bullying. We will expel any student who buys or tries to buy, or possesses or uses cigarettes (or any tobacco product like tobacco pouches, 'snus', or snuff, or 'vaping' equipment) or a lighter or matches or alcohol or uses or possess or is with anyone else using or possessing a water-filled balloon. In the case of rule-breaking or bad behaviour, generally we place your child on a 3-day suspended expulsion. It is designed to be unpleasant. The child is removed from Course activities, put on a report and behaviour is closely watched for the next three days. We try to contact you at the start to inform you what has happened and to ask you to contact us in three days' time. If there has been an improvement, the suspended expulsion is lifted. If not, we ask you to remove your child within 72 hours. Any subsequent rule-breaking will result in expulsion. If we cannot contact you, this makes no difference to either the suspended expulsion or the expulsion itself. If we consider it necessary, we may remove the student from the School during the period of suspended expulsion. Our rules apply at all times during the Course, including visits outside the School.

Examples of causes for immediate expulsion with no 'second chance' are listed here:-

- Theft (e.g. shoplifting) or any other crime
- Buying, trying to buy, using, possessing cigarettes, smoking material, any drug
- Unauthorised use of the roof or fire-escapes
- Buying, attempting to buy or drinking or possessing alcohol or being in a pub
- Bullying or harassment
- Hitting
- Behaviour that we consider is a danger to others, or to ourselves, or to property

At my discretion, the writer of the original 'letter of recommendation' is informed of expulsion. We assume that anyone with a person breaking a rule is also breaking that rule.

Pending collection, the child may be removed to my house. We shall also insist that parents remove any child incorrectly described on the Application Form as being in good health mentally or physically or where we feel the presence of the child constitutes a danger to him/herself and/or other children.

Fees are not refundable in the event of expulsion or requested removal and parents must make immediate removal arrangements. Please explain these sanctions to your child.

Safeguarding

We shall fulfil our Safeguarding obligations 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 Safeguarding obligations, 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 our control, we shall expel. Safeguarding obligations include requesting that arrival and departure timings are within our requested time-frames. If they are not, we shall insist that flights are changed.

If a parent asks a child to break our rules

We cannot discipline children for the actions of parents who undermine us. By the same token we cannot accept responsibility for children who selectively break our rules at the request of parents by, for example, hiding a mobile phone or cigarettes. We consider this makes it impossible for us to exercise our duty of care and is thus a breach of contract.

English Law applies

All children under English Law are entitled to certain protections. We must uphold their right to being safeguarded even if this is contradictory to what the child's parent requests.

Homesickness

There is a note on the way we view homesickness on the Parents' (Password-Protected) page at vactionalstudies.com. This is like an illness and does get better. It rarely happens, but if it does, let us cope. If, after a few days, we think it necessary, we shall contact you. We try to involve the children in so many activities that they don't have time to feel homesick. The worst thing you can do is say to your child - 'If you don't like it, you can come home.' This makes the child feel that when the first minor problem comes along, he/she can call you and you will have to keep your promise. A voice from home can be unsettling for children - hence our 'Telephone Days'. The problem is usually the other way round - students don't want to leave at the end.

Reports

A progress report giving initial impressions (which may be modified by better acquaintance) is e-mailed after about a week. A final report and leaving certificate is sent by airmail after the Course.

Complaints

If you have a complaint about us that we cannot resolve, it should be referred to The British Council on +44 (0) 161 957 7755 or commentsandcomplaints@britishcouncil.org.

Please keep in contact with us

We are glad to assist you before, during and after the Course.

Thank you

We are grateful for your co-operation with the above. As you can imagine, we are all very busy during the Course with the teaching and the sports/entertainments programme. These 'Notes' will help us concentrate on those aspects of the Course so your child benefits from the experience. I am so busy in July and early August that, if you write to me then, I may not be able to reply until everything has finished. During the Course, it is best to communicate with the Course Manager at the School.

A typical day

08.00 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 Digest and Masterclass
14.30 Break
15.00 Organised sports and games
18.00 Evening meal
19.00 Games, events, etc.
21.00 Hot chocolate and biscuits
21.30 'Club'
22.45 Bedtime (or 22.30 or earlier for 10-13s)

Telephone days (10.00-13.00 English time)

Sunday 18 July and Sunday 1 August
Telephone your child's mobile.

Please telephone only from 10.00 – 13.00 English time. English time is generally one hour earlier than in other European countries.

You cannot reach a student on our Newbury Office number or on my mobile number.

School address & Course Manager's phone number

VacStuds at Cheam School

Newbury Berkshire RG19 8LD (+44 7812 577 336)

FOR LETTERS TO STUDENTS DO NOT USE OUR OFFICE ADDRESS, FAX OR E-MAIL AS THESE ARE CENTRALISED AWAY FROM THE SCHOOL

What happens when

31 March	First date for informing about travel plans
15 May	All second invoices to be paid
6 June	Last date for advising travel information
60 days before Course	Last date for cancellation
3 weeks before Course	Last date for sending pocket money via Bank
Start of Course	Use School phone number for contacting us
11 July	Course Starts
10 days into Course	Expect the Progress Report
18 July	Telephone Day
1 August	Telephone Day
Week 4	Sports Day
7 August 13.00 BST	Course Ends
One week before end	Stop writing to children
End of Course	Use Newbury Office address
2-3 weeks after Course	Expect the Final Report by post

House colours

We provide (at no charge) children with a special VacStuds 2027 T-shirt in their House colour:

Cheam	Red
Douai-Elstree	Yellow
Hawtreys	Green
Mary Hare	Blue

Parents are welcome at Sports Day.