



Educational Guardianship Policy

This policy, which applies to the whole school, inclusive of boarding, is publicly available on the school website and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from the School Office.

Owner: Director of External Relations

Approving Body: Safeguarding and Wellbeing Committee

Date of last Review: October 2025

Date of next Review: October 2026

Linked Polices, Procedures and Resource Materials:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Missing Student Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Boarding Care Policy
- Medical Care Policy
- Visitors and Visiting Speakers Policy
- Student Supervision Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- EAL Policy
- Parent Contract

AIMS

At Woldingham School, safeguarding its students and ensuring that they are looked after in a safe, caring, and nurturing environment is the School's 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.

RESPONSIBILITIES

As a matter of Boarding Schools' Association recommended practice and Woldingham School policy, it is 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 child. 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, **the school strongly recommends that parents select a Guardian who has been accredited by AEGIS** (The Association for the Education & Guardianship of International Students) **or the BSA Guardian Scheme**. This is particularly important if the Guardian/agency takes multiple students. A list of their accredited Guardians is available at <http://www.aegisuk.net>.

While Woldingham School does not recommend specific agencies or guardianship companies, the following BSA/AEGIS approved companies have been shared by families with children currently at the school.

Quest Guardians www.questguardians.co.uk/en

Academic Families/English Country Guardians www.academicfamilies.com

Bright World Guardianships www.brightworld.co.uk

White House Guardians www.whg.eu.com

Pippa's Guardians www.pippasguardians.co.uk

The Guardian Family Network www.guardianfamilynetwork.com

Once a guardian has been appointed by the parents, the *Educational Guardian Details* form, found on the parent portal, must be completed and signed by both parents and guardian. This form includes a 'Letter of Undertaking' which must be completed as part of the safeguarding and guardianship requirements issued by the Home Office. 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 child's Guardian, a new form must be completed to advise the school of the change. The School takes 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 and such concerns will be referred to the relevant agencies.

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 should 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, the school requires 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 leave arrangements.

ROLES OF THE EDUCATIONAL GUARDIAN

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 and able 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 student's Head of Year and Housemistress.

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 and safe travel arrangements

- 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. At the end of each half-term, students should have departed from school by 5pm at the latest and by 12pm at the latest at the end of the school year. On return after a half-term or full-term holiday, students are expected to return to school between 4pm and 8pm on the day before each term or half-term restarts. 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 departs on a late flight;
- The guardian must be able to offer suitable accommodation to the student whilst in their care and provide all meals. Host families/guardians should ensure that students:
 - Have their own room;
 - Are invited to join family activities/treated as part of a normal caring family and are not spending excessive amounts of time alone;
 - Are able to enjoy an appropriate level of privacy eg locks on bathroom doors;
 - Have appropriate level of supervision; adult to child ratio 1:3;
 - Have a quiet place to study;
 - Have access to an outside space or an opportunity to spend time outside;
 - Have access to facilities to prepare snacks and drinks;
 - Have appropriate access to shops and other facilities;
 - Comply with School rules and UK law at all times eg with regard to activities involving alcohol, drugs, vaping, relationships etc.
- When the student is unable to make the journey home, most obviously when the school is closed for shorter holidays such as half-term or if students are required to be away from school unexpectedly for example, for medical, loss of services or disciplinary reasons, the school requires the guardian to assume responsibility for their accommodation in a timely manner (within 12 hours);
- 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 the student where requested;

- In order to fulfil this role, **it is essential that guardians live within reasonable distance of the school – the School will not accept guardians who live more than an hour away unless exceptional circumstances are outlined to the school and agreed in advance;**
- 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 to school, 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. In line with the School's Attendance Policy, such requests are acknowledged but will be recorded as unauthorised absence;
- 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;
- On travel days, in the event that a flight is cancelled or severely delayed, the guardian must assume responsibility for the student which might include waiting at the airport or arranging suitable accommodation for them until their flight leaves.

GUIDELINES

The school will hold a copy of the Educational Guardian Details form signed by both parents and the guardian 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 whilst the student is in the UK, 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

students may stay with host families, students are not to be placed with host families which include a member of staff at Woldingham School.

ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

If a student is not travelling home or staying with their own family during a school holiday, the School will not permit the student to stay somewhere alone or 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 leave arrangements if the school is not entirely happy with the arrangements which are being made. Student wellbeing and safety are at the forefront of any decision to decline such permission.

Housemistresses will ask students about their experiences with host families/educational guardians and will flag any concerns immediately to the relevant person, usually the Director of Boarding and DSL as well as record on CPOMS.

Where a concern is raised, the following steps will be followed as necessary:

- Meet with the student
- Contact with the parent to inform of concerns
- Contact with the Guardianship company to discuss concerns
- Alert relevant authorities: AEGIS/BSA/LEA
- In exceptional circumstances, UKVI may need to be informed if this policy is not adhered to and violates visa requirements