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Dear Homestay applicant,

Many thanks for your interest in becoming a homestay host for the International Department at Itchen Sixth Form College. This letter will inform you about what happens next and provides information on the requirements.

Initial Host Visit

We will look at your application and, if we think you are suitable, we will make an appointment to come and visit your home. The visit will take approximately 45 minutes and we will tell you about our expectations, answer any questions you have and have a look at your accommodation. We will take photos to keep on record and to send to students who ask to see pictures of their allocated host. Once a host has been accepted, the International Office will make a routine visit every year to inspect the property.

References

We will require two character references about you before you can join the register. These must be completed by someone who has known you for at least two years and is not a member of your family. They could be your employer or manager; a friend; a member of the community who has experience of knowing you with under 18's or an existing homestay who is not a member of your family. Please ensure that you nominate two people on your application form and include their name, full postal address and other contact details, as well as their relationship to you. You will need to confirm that they are willing to provide a reference for you. The college will then get in touch with them to ask them to complete a reference form. Their references will be kept completely confidential – although they may of course choose to share it with you.

DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) Certificates

After the visit, if you're accepted and decide to continue with the process of hosting, we will ask you, and any other household member aged 16 or over, to complete a DBS application form. A DBS certificate is required by law for anyone working with children, whether on a paid or voluntary basis. Costs of the initial DBS checks will be covered by Itchen College and any future certificates required throughout your time as a Homestay Host for Itchen will be incurred at your own expense. Certificates will need to be renewed every 3 years.

DBS certificates are now sent to the applicant directly, rather than to the organisation requesting the certificate. Once you have received the certificate(s), we would ask that you send the original(s) to us directly; we will take a note on the number and the date of issue, and return the certificate to you. Please make a copy of the certificate before sending it to us and keep the original in a safe place. Once it is returned to you, we should not need to see it again but it is important that you keep it safe.

Please note that we a DBS certificate is required for any permanent member of your household who is aged 16 or over, or semi-permanent household members. This might include non-resident partners, older children or parents who visit the property regularly, particularly those that stay overnight.

DBS Update Service

If you are part of the DBS update programme, you may be exempt from completing another DBS check. Please get in touch with us for further advice. For further information about the Update Service, please read through the guidelines on the DBS website: <https://www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service>

Gas Safety Certificate

You will also need to get a Landlord's Gas Safety Certificate. This should cover ALL gas appliances within the property. You can use any engineer who is listed on the Gas Safety Register (<http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk/>). This will be at your own expense and is a yearly requirement. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you need any help with this.

Fire Risk Assessment

When having paying guests, you are required by law to provide a fire risk assessment. This will be done on an annual basis when your revisit inspection takes place. We ask that you display an emergency exit poster with details of the fire escape route in your home.

Cultural Exchange

After completing all the steps outlined above, you can expect your first international student(s) arrival (although no student placements are ever guaranteed). The student(s) will become a member of your home and I am sure you will both benefit from this extraordinary experience.

Being a host is more involved than having a lodger stay with you. Itchen College has it's own guidelines for recruiting new hosts and we look for Homestay Hosts that will not treat their student as a paying guest, but rather as 'one of the family'; from having the opportunity to sit and chat with you at meal times, to spending time sharing a TV programme or a board game. These occasions are invaluable for students to practice their English conversation skills and newly learnt words. We also ask that you take an interest in your student's attendance and progress. You will receive a text message if your student misses a lesson without authorization. This should not mean that the student will take over the normal routine of the host family, but rather that the host integrates them into the normal daily routine of the household.

We are looking for hosts who will provide a warm welcome and will be willing to help their student settle into Southampton. All of our students provide feedback on all aspects of their stay and accommodation here and we will naturally give priority to Homestays that receive the best feedback. If you feel that you are unable to provide this level of care and support, this may not be the right time for you to be hosting International students from Itchen College.

If you have any further queries about the hosting programme please do not hesitate to contact the International Department on 023 8043 5636 ext 305.

We look forward to receiving your application form.

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International Student Accommodation and Welfare Officer

Last updated 01/04/2025 LJ