



# Te Kuiti High School

Homestay  
Information for Host  
Families

## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to your role as a Homestay Family. International students come to a New Zealand School for a variety of reasons. By far the greatest majority come to either learn or improve their English. Others come to obtain qualifications, which will enable them enter into tertiary study in New Zealand. Some come because their family want them to and others because they value our clean, unpolluted environment. It is important to determine why your student has come as it will shape their attitude to school and personal life.

Those whose main focus is English often choose to live in homestay accommodation because this way they will learn English faster and gain some understanding of New Zealand culture and customs.

For many students it is the first time they have left home or have to be responsible for themselves. It is a huge culture shock adjusting to different routines, food expectations, transport systems etc along with any communication difficulties they may have. Each student will react differently to living in your home depending on their age, life experiences, culture, expectations, and personality.

It is important the student accepts and understands the way your family works, e.g. standards, routines, expected contributions to the household. The experience of having someone of another culture living with you needs to be a positive one for your own family as being a learning experience for everyone.

### **WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE HOMESTAY PARENTS?**

As Homestay parents you are responsible for the behaviour and supervision of the student in your care but you are NOT the legal guardians. It is your responsibility to explain the standards of behaviour expected and to inform the school if these are not being met.

### **WHAT DO WE HAVE TO PROVIDE?**

The students must have:

- His/her own room
- A desk
- A lamp
- Adequate heating and lighting
- Three meals a day
- Laundry facilities ( some students may wish to do their own laundry)

The most satisfying homestay experiences are when the student is included in the wider family outings, for example, visiting grandmother, watching sports events, going to the beach etc. Such outings do not have to incur large expense to be valuable for the student. Assistance may be necessary helping the student open a bank account. Guidance when purchasing school uniform and escorting the student to school on the first day is also the responsibility of the Homestay family.

## **THE FIRST FEW HOURS**

Make them welcome:

- Offer food and/or drinks
- Introduce family members
- Inform the student of the accepted form of address in your home. I.e. Mum/Dad or first names.
- Show them their room and around the house
- Check pronunciation carefully and what they want to be called.
- Go over mealtimes
- Go over shower/bathroom times and how to use.
- Give them a local map

## **THE FIRST FEW WEEKS**

There are a number of subjects that need to be discussed:

- Family routines: mornings/bedtimes, mealtimes, particularly how much notice you expect if the student is not coming home to dinner.
- Bathroom routines: who uses the room and at what times and how long to spend in the shower.
- Use of telephone, toll charges, how late friends can ring
- Clothes washing
- Heating
- Bringing friends home for a meal or to stay

If your homestay student has limited comprehension of spoken English it may be helpful to write down a few points of family routine. Students often have a good understanding of written English and feel more secure with this.

## **WHAT IF THE STUDENT AND FAMILY DON'T GET ON?**

It takes time to adjust to a new country, climate, school, family and food. Te Kuiti High School requires a compulsory four weeks in any homestay. After this time the student may be moved to another home at the request of either the student or the homestay family. Two weeks notice is the minimum. It may take longer to find a new family.

Students from tropical countries will feel very cold in New Zealand. It is wise to encourage your student to wear more underclothes and woollen jumpers in preference to sweatshirts.

Encourage the student to join the family in the living room for at least part of every evening where it is warm, rather than using their heater in the bedroom. International students often do not understand that electricity bills may be high in New Zealand.

## **WHAT ARE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS A HOST STUDENT AND FAMILY MAY EXPERIENCE?**

- Homesickness
- Tiredness
- Withdrawal – shutting the bedroom door
- Not keeping to the ground rules
- Over studying – studying until 2 a.m.
- Too much money – a very wealthy student with too much pocket money
- Speaking on the phone too much
- Speaking their own language too much
- Apparent arrogance – this may be shyness
- Using the clothes dryer/ heater too much

## **WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT ANY PROBLEMS?**

Many problems are caused by ‘culture shock’ or deeply ingrained cultural difference.

‘Culture shock’ is the term used for the natural anxiety felt when entering a new culture. The four phases of culture shock are:

- Eager anticipation
- Everything is beautiful
- Everything is awful
- Everything is OK

Some recognisable signs of culture shock are:

- Tiredness
- Loneliness
- Desire for home cooking
- Old friends
- Feelings of helplessness and withdrawal
- Excessive concern for cleanliness
- Fear for personal safety
- Irritability and defensive communication

Culture shock, coupled with the strain of coping with a foreign language and a new education system may give a particular need for privacy. Try to give your students time out alone daily. Ensure that all family members are aware of the signs of culture shock. The international student will appreciate this support and understanding from everyone in the host family.

Don’t assume the student has understood when they nod and say they understand. Many International students are either embarrassed or too polite to let you know when they don’t understand. You can re-phrase the question, write it down or draw a picture to help the student with communication difficulties.

## **HOW ARE BOARD PAYMENTS MADE?**

Payments are usually fortnightly in advance and will be made by automatic payment to a designated account.

In the case of a student leaving two weeks notice must be given.

In the case of a student returning to the home country for the Christmas holidays no board payments should be made unless personal gear is being stored in which case a nominal allowance will be paid.

## **WHAT ABOUT MEDICAL INSURANCE?**

Medical Insurance is the responsibility of the student. The school has information which may assist with this. The student would normally have the same doctor as the homestay family.

## **ARE THERE PROBLEMS WITH FOOD?**

On the whole we have experienced few problems with food. Students expect to eat New Zealand food in New Zealand but from time to time will naturally crave their own cuisine. Students can be encouraged to cook and may wish to keep their own supply of spices and other ingredients on hand. From time to time host families could attempt to provide a meal from the culture of their student.

Some suggestions about food are:

- Provide plenty of fresh fruit
- If your student is from an Asian culture keep rice or noodles in the cupboard and invite the student to cook these if they wish
- Ask your student to give you a simple recipe from their country and cook this
- There are many international takeaway shops now. If possible occasionally try and buy the takeaway food of the country of your student.

