



WESTMINSTER  
SCHOOL

# GUARDIANSHIP AND EMERGENCY CONTACT POLICY

Author: James Kazi  
Lead: Deputy Head (Academic)

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### INTRODUCTION

Westminster greatly values the diversity that both our UK and international pupils bring to the School's community.

Under the Children Act 1989, the School is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. During term time for boarders and during the working day for pupils, the School is responsible for a pupil's welfare and acts *in loco parentis*. However, there are times when the School must be able to hand over these parental responsibilities to an appointed Guardian or Emergency Contact if the parent is not available.

### CONCERNS ABOUT GUARDIANS, EMERGENCY CONTACTS OR GUARDIANSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

If, at any point, during a pupil's time at Westminster, the School has concerns about the suitability of a Guardian, Emergency Contact or guardianship arrangement then the parents will be informed, where appropriate. It may be the case, depending on the nature of the concern that the Police and / or the Local Area Designated Officer and / or Children's Services may be contacted. Specifically, the School will alert the local authority to any arrangements that may constitute private fostering.

The School may request a change of Guardian or Emergency Contact or a revision of the arrangement. If the School continues to have concerns about the child's Guardian or Emergency Contact arrangements, the child could be asked to leave the School.

It should be noted, for example, that the School does not consider unsupervised stays in a person's house, or in either hotels or bed and breakfast accommodation to be an adequate level of accommodation or care.

### DEFINITIONS

#### For boarders:

In this document, the term "Guardian" refers to an Education Guardian, which involves a delegation of parental responsibility, usually for short periods of time. This is distinct from a Legal Guardian, which refers to a person who is appointed to care for a child when a parent or guardian has died, or to a person acting as a guardian of a child's estate.

#### For day pupils:

An "Emergency Contact" is someone who is an alternative point of contact and who will be able to provide assistance to a child at short notice.

## **APPOINTING A GUARDIAN (FOR BOARDING PUPILS) / EMERGENCY CONTACT (FOR DAY PUPILS)**

- It is the parents' responsibility to appoint a Guardian / Emergency Contact; the organisation and selection process rests solely with parents.
- The appointed Guardian / Emergency Contact must be over 25 years of age (such that they might provide a safe environment and are able to demonstrate sufficient emotional maturity to be able to deal with potentially challenging familial situations); they must be permanently resident in the UK; they must be able to be at the School within two hours, if requested.
- The appointed Guardian / Emergency Contact must be fluent in the English language and be able to provide a point of contact for the School at all times.
- Ideally, the Guardian / Emergency Contact should be a relative or family friend who is well known to the pupil, and be someone with whom the pupil feels happy and comfortable staying.
- For many pupils where the family does not have a suitable contact in the UK, it is expected that the parents will appoint a Guardian / Emergency Contact via a reputable organisation. It is important to note that the School does not recommend any specific agency or organisation, but requires parents to ensure that it is a member of the Association for the Education and Guardianship of International Students (AEGIS). AEGIS can be contacted via their website: [www.aegisuk.net](http://www.aegisuk.net)

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PARENT WITH REGARD TO A GUARDIAN / EMERGENCY CONTACT**

If an appointed Guardian / Emergency Contact changes during a pupil's time at the School, it is the parents' responsibility to ensure accurate updated contact details (telephone, mobile, email and full postal address) are communicated to the School as soon as possible, in order to ensure continuity of care. Guardianship / Emergency Contact arrangements should be renewed when necessary by parents for the duration of the pupil's time at Westminster.

UK-based parents of both day pupils and boarders who plan to be away for an extended period are asked to inform the Housemaster in good time and to check confirm those details with the Guardian / Emergency Contact and ensure that contact details are current and valid.

## **GUARDIAN / EMERGENCY CONTACT RESPONSIBILITIES**

All Guardians / Emergency Contacts must be prepared to undertake, where necessary, the following responsibilities:

- To read the Terms and Conditions that are agreed to by all parents of the pupils at Westminster School.
- To provide a 24-hour point of contact throughout the academic year whenever the parent is out of the UK.
- To be ready to accommodate safely and take responsibility for the pupil at short notice in case of emergency or crisis, including medical and disciplinary issues.
- To act with delegated parental authority in the case of an emergency or crisis and to make appropriate arrangements for medical care.
- To make suitable alternative arrangements if they are unable to accommodate the pupil themselves, and to inform both Housemaster and parents of the arrangements.

All Guardians must be prepared to undertake, where necessary, the following responsibilities:

- To provide safe and suitable accommodation for the pupil with an appropriate degree of care and supervision when they cannot be accommodated at School and to liaise with the

Housemaster regarding these arrangements. Occasions are likely to include, but are not restricted to:

- Exeat weekends
  - Exeats (half-term breaks) and longer holidays
  - Days at the start and end of term when a pupil's flights do not coincide with term dates
  - If a pupil does not wish to remain in School even though the School remains open
  - If a pupil is ill or injured and needs to recuperate away from School, especially in the case when a pupil has an infection and needs to be looked after until at least 48hrs after the symptoms have subsided
  - If the School requires a pupil to leave for disciplinary reasons or because the School determines it to be in the pupil's best interests
  - Any other occasion when the pupil is released from the School.
- To liaise with the School over all matters pertaining to the pupil's welfare, including pastoral, academic and medical care.
  - To ensure that the pupil's passport, associated travel documents and residency permits are current and valid.
  - To support pupils in applying for and processing Biometric Residence Permits, including undertaking visits to government agencies (including the Police).
  - To attend important parent and teacher meetings or any other important meetings at the School on behalf of the parents.

The responsibilities of Guardians appointed by overseas parents and those appointed by parents in the UK are identical. However, over the usual course of the year, there are likely to be practical differences in a Guardian's level of involvement:

- For overseas parents: the Guardian is usually responsible for the delivery and collection of pupils at the beginning and end of term notifying the School about those arrangements in full, and (where the pupil is not travelling to their home overseas) for providing a home for pupils during Exeats and Leave Weekends.
- For UK-based parents: the Guardian must be able to substitute fully for parents when parents are away or unavailable. This includes providing everything mentioned in the points above.

In a crisis, if the Head Master, Under Master or Housemaster are unable to contact parents, the Guardian will have to give permission for medical care. If neither parents nor Guardian / Emergency Contact can be contacted, the Housemaster is empowered to act *in loco parentis* – as if they were the legal Guardian.