



OXFORD SPIRES  
INTERNATIONAL



# Student Handbook

BEDFORD SCHOOL | 2025

DE PARYS AVE, BEDFORD, BEDFORDSHIRE MK40 2TU

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# Welcome

## Hello and welcome to Oxford Spires International!

We are very happy that you have decided to join us at Bedford School and we are looking forward to meeting you!

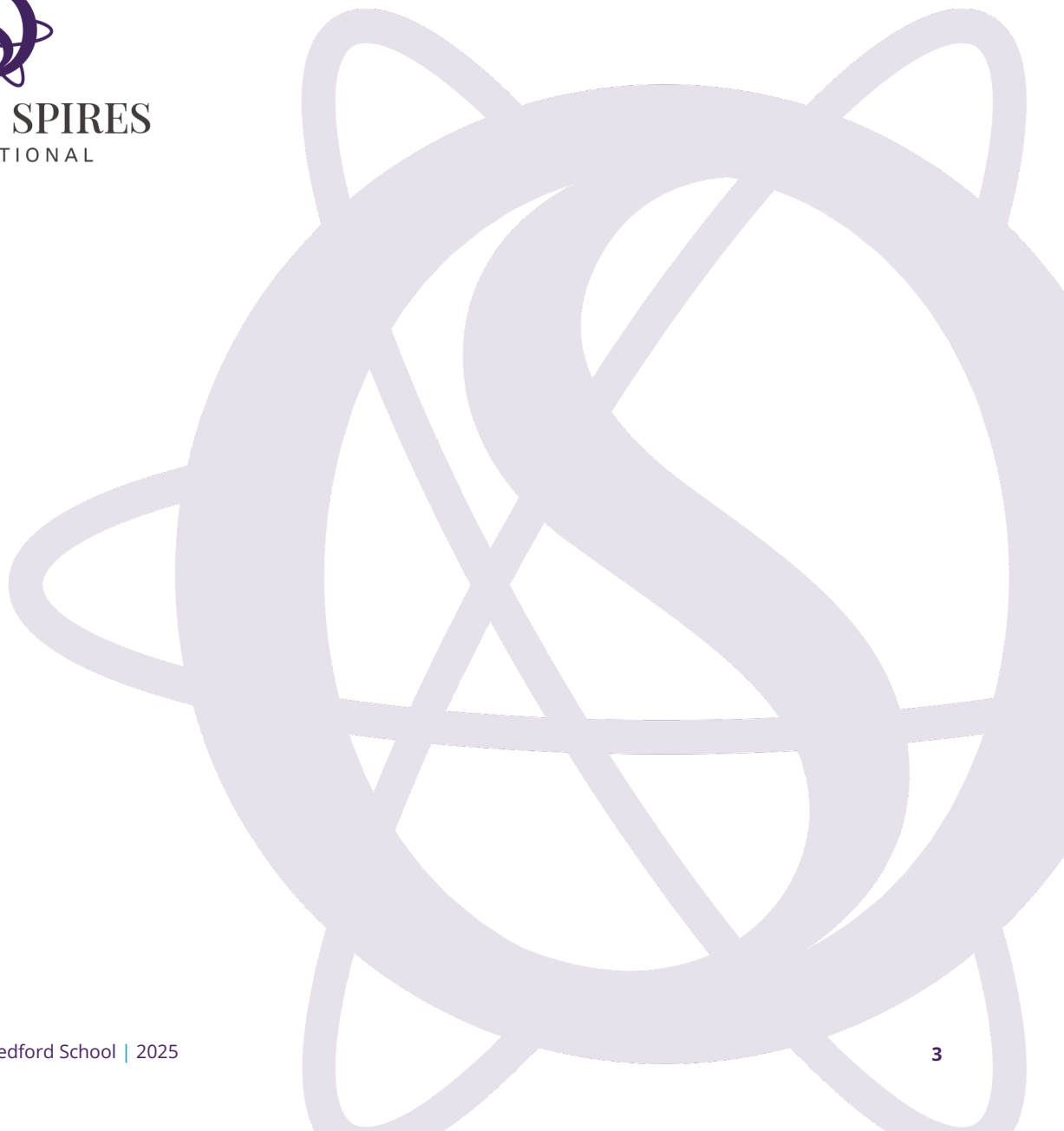
Oxford Spires International has a proud traditional and first class reputation for offering unique and rewarding experiences. We are delighted that you have chosen to join us and our staff will support you throughout your stay with us.

Best wishes,

***Oxford Spires International***



**OXFORD SPIRES**  
INTERNATIONAL





# About Oxford Spires International

Oxford Spires International is part of the Oxford Virtual Education Group, which has been providing safe and exciting programmes for young people since 1998.

Oxford Spires International offers English programmes in Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire and Gloucestershire for international young people to explore the UK, experience British culture, and develop their skills and confidence in using English. Oxford Spires International also offers unique and exciting educational opportunities in the USA.

Our programmes are a combination of English lessons, activities, workshops, and excursions, which means that all our students have lots of opportunities to have fun, make new friends and practise their English skills!

We are proud to be accredited by BAC (British Accreditation Council), English UK and Young Learners English UK.

Our Mission is to provide a safe, enjoyable and enriching learning experience. We aim to be helpful and efficient, honest and reliable, and strive to build students' confidence in using the English language through meaningful experiences.





# Meet the Team

Your **centre managers, teachers** and **activity leaders** are looking forward to meeting you and leading your lessons and activities.

If you are travelling as part of a group, your **group leader** is responsible for keeping you safe and well during your stay. He or she will be with you every day during your programme.

If you are travelling independently, a member of staff will act as your group leader.

**If you have any questions or problems during your stay, please speak to your group leader or any member of staff.**

**Andy, Josh, Mike and Opal** work in Head Office. They are responsible for organising your programme, and they will speak regularly to your group leader.

You will also see **Head Office staff** at school and during activities. We love to take photos and chat to you! Please come and speak to us if you have any ideas or feedback for us, and of course, if you have any serious problems.

Remember that all of our staff are very happy to help you and make your stay as comfortable as possible!



# Arrival in the UK: Students Travelling as Part of a Group

## When you arrive:

- Go through passport control
- Collect your bags and ensure that you have all your luggage
- Follow your Group Leader out the baggage claim area
- Your group leader will contact the coach, and you will be taken to the centre

Please note: airports in the UK can often be very busy and at peak times, it can take 1-2 hours from the time a flight lands to complete passport control and baggage collection. Our staff will always follow the live flight information and will be aware of any delays.

**If you get lost or separated from your group, phone:**

**+44 (0) 1865 800 290**



## If You Are Travelling Alone

Upon arrival at the airport, you will be met in the arrivals area by your chauffeur and escorted to the waiting taxi and transferred directly to the school.

Oxford Spires always use reputable chauffeur companies at all our sites. All drivers will have the appropriate ID and will have a sign displaying your name and centre name.

You can, at any time day or night, contact Oxford Spires on 01865 800 290 for assistance.

## Parent or Guardian Consent Form

Every student travelling to the UK without their parents or guardian **MUST** carry the Letter of Consent to Travel (Parent Confirmation Letter). This letter confirms that the named student is attending an Oxford Spires school and contains the emergency telephone number for the School.

A template of this letter will be sent to you as part of your Pre-Arrival Information.

Parents must sign this letter and you should carry it with your passport at the time when travelling. You may be asked to show it at immigration / passport control when entering the UK.

Parents and guardians may also want to consider having this letter notarised (witnessed or signed by a solicitor) as recently the regulations have changed for children travelling from certain countries without their parent.

In particular this applies to children travelling from Italy or Spain who may not be able to board a flight without

either a notarised letter or a letter from the local police (in Italy this is called the Dichiarazione Di Affidò).

We recommend that parents check with the airline and local police about whether you will need any official documentation to leave the country without being accompanied by a parent or guardian.

## Unaccompanied Minor Assistance

If you are flying to the UK without a parent or guardian, your parents can request UNACCOMPANIED MINOR (UM) Assistance directly from the airline. This means that a member of the airline staff will stay with you from check-in until handing you over to a named representative at the destination.

This service is available from most airlines and should be arranged with the airline when making the flight reservation. Most airlines will charge a small fee for the UM Assistance. Some airlines will not accept child travellers under the age of 16 without also booking the UM service.

Oxford Spires recommends you check the airline's policy about child travellers in advance of the date of travel.

Where the UM service is booked, the airline will usually request the details of the person who will be meeting the child at the destination and we can provide you with this information if it is required.

On occasion there may be changes to arrangements and the named member of staff given for the UM Assistance may change. If this is the case we will always arrange for another member of our team to meet you and the named member of staff will sign a Letter of Authorisation so that they are legally able to collect you.



## Centre Arrival

Once at the centre, you will be checked in and then shown to your accommodation where you will be given time to unpack and settle in to your rooms. You will be introduced to an Oxford Spires member of staff and to other students in the accommodation.

All new arrivals will be given a health and safety briefing as well as the fire safety and evacuation briefing and demonstration.

## Bedford School – Transfer Time

Average journey times to and from Bedford School are:

London Heathrow Airport	1 hour
London Gatwick Airport	1.5 hours
London Stansted Airport	1 hour
London Luton Airport	1.5 hours
London (St. Pancras International) – Train	1.5 hours

## Bedford School & the Local Area

- Bedford School is located just a short walk from Bedford town centre v
- Good to access to the cities of: Oxford, London, and Cambridge.
- At Bedford School, boys & girls will be based in separate school residence accommodation, which is located on-campus
- Within each boarding house there are single, twin, and larger bedrooms, with sociable common rooms.
- Laundry facilities will also be available in each boarding house, for use **once a week**, with bed linens provided & changed **weekly**. However, towels will **not be provided**.
- All meals will be prepared and served in the school canteen, minus packed lunches which will be provided prior to excursions. \_\_\_\_\_
- There is free wifi on **campus**, & also sporting fields. \_\_\_\_\_

# Bedford School – Accommodation





# Classroom



# Dining Hall





## Common Area



## Aerial View



# Bedford School – Sample Menu\*

	Day1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Main Courses	Sticky BBQ Chicken	Battered of breaded fish MSC	Garlic & herb chicken	Sausage & mash with onion gravy Chicken & leek pie	Vegetable fajita ✓
	Plant based kofta	Quorn VE or chicken nuggets	Buttermilk quorn burger ✓		Selection of pizzas ✓
	Chicken katsu curry	Chicken korma	Chicken fillet in a bun with salad and mayo	Leek, chive and mushroom frittata ✓	Fish fillet MSC in bun with cheese and shredded lettuce
Sides	Rice	Chips	Sweetcorn	Mashed potatoes	Mini potato balls
	Broccoli	Rice	Savoury rice	Roast carrots Garden peas	Rice Sweetcorn
	Garden peas	Mushy peas	Herb diced potatoes	Baked beans	Baked beans
	Baked beans	Baked beans	Baked beans	Mixed salad	Mixed salad
	Mixed salad	Mixed salad	Mixed salad	Pesto	Tomato ketchup
Sauces	BBQ sauce	American mustard	Salsa	Garlic mayo	Tartare sauce
	Autumn chutney	Tartare sauce	Garlic mayo	Tomato ketchup	Light mayonnaise
	Pesto	Tomato ketchup	Burger sauce		
Pasta	Italian tomato and basil, macaroni cheese or pesto pasta ✓				
Jacket	Houmous ✓, tuna mayo, baked beans ✓, cheddar cheese ✓, or coleslaw ✓				
Bread	Freshly made garlic and parsley bread ✓				
Soup	Mushroom soup	Cauliflower and cheddar soup	Butterbean and chive soup	Lentil soup	Wasteknot vegetable soup
	All soups and salads are vegetarian				
Salad	Selection of daily protein choices				
	House salad: shredded lettuce, rocket, cherry tomatoes, cucumber, celery, onion				
	Our own coleslaw in light mayonnaise				
	Tomato, onion and basil salad	Beetroot salad	Carrot and ginger salad	Pesto pasta	Spanish potato salad
Dressing	Light mayonnaise, garlic mayonnaise and caesar sauce				
Dessert	Choose one from: apple, orange, banana, jelly, yoghurt with a selection of toppings, daily dessert				

\*Please note that this is a SAMPLE menu only, and is subject to change by the dining room staff at Bedford School.

Please inform us in advance, through the online consent form, if you have any specific health problems, food allergies or learning requirements.

Please note that we need to know about food allergies and special access requests at least **two weeks before you arrive.**

# Sample Timetable\*

[Click here to download sample residential timetable](#)



\*Please note that this is a **SAMPLE timetable only**, and the order, type and times of activities may change by the time of your arrival to Bedford College.

You will be given your finalised schedule on arrival and the daily timetable will be placed on the school notice boards.



# Your First Day at Bedford School

On the first full day at school, we will:

- speak to you about your programme at Bedford School and what you will be doing during your time here;
- go through the school rules;
- go over your timetables;
- introduce you to our members of staff;
- and show you who you can speak to during the school day if you have any problems.

**Please be respectful of the school and the teachers during your programme. Remember, you are representing Oxford Spires International, your own school, and your country!**

## Please bring:

- a notebook
- pens/pencils
- clothes for sport (you may have PE lessons)
- a reusable water bottle
- please see page 21 for information about which clothes to bring

# English Programme

**Our qualified teachers will be using fun activities and teaching materials to promote active use of real life English... so you'll have interesting lessons. And here's some important information about your classes...**

- Please bring pens and paper to class.  
On occasion you'll be given a short amount of homework. Please make sure you do it - the teacher might want to use it with the class in the next lesson.
- There will be different nationalities and different ages in each class, but you will be with other students who have a similar level of English.
- If you have a problem with your classes or other students, tell your class teacher or your group leader.
- If you have a problem with your teacher, please speak to your group leader. Your group leader can then talk to your Centre Manager. If you are ill and can't come to a class, you must tell your Group Leader before the class starts. Your Group Leader then needs to tell the Centre Manager.

# English Lessons

## What will we do in lessons?

You can expect lots of different activities in the classroom, such as:

- role plays
- group work
- pair work
- project work
- debates
- conversation practice
- presentations
- pronunciation practice

If there is anything specific you would like to learn about, please speak to your teacher and they will try to add this to your lessons.

## Learning Objectives

At Oxford Spires International we want you to have FUN learning with us!

During your programme, we want you to:

- **enjoy** learning!
- improve your **confidence**
- develop your **learning skills**
- **practise using English** inside and outside the classroom
- use your skills to meet new people and **experience the UK**



# How to Improve Your English Quickly

Here are some useful ideas about how to improve your English.  
Try them – they will help!

## 1. If you need help with your speaking:

- Speak as much as possible to your partners in class.
- Plan what you want to say, then practise a dialogue in your head.
- Speak to at least five people outside class every day.
- Have a conversation on a different topic every day.
- Try to speak English to your friends who speak your language.
- Try to use three words or idioms you've learnt recently.
- Don't worry if you make mistakes! It's natural.

## 2. If you need help with your writing:

- Write a diary for every day of the week, describing your feelings, the weather, your activities, etc.
- Make sure you do your homework.
- Check the spelling of ten words in the dictionary every day.
- Copy out your corrected homework so there are no mistakes.
- Use paragraphs!
- Find a pen friend and write regularly
- Try to find alternatives for simple words like 'good / bad / nice / get

## 3. If you need help with your listening:

- Sit near your teacher.
- Listen to your favourite songs in English and read the text at the same time.
- Repeat texts of songs as you listen.
- Listen to the people talking around you. What are they talking about? How do they feel?
- Listen carefully to the intonation of people talking. Do their voices go up or down, and when?
- Record yourself reading English, then listen to yourself. Is it clear?
- Listen for key words when people are speaking to you.
- Don't be afraid to ask people to repeat what they are saying.



#### 4. If you need help with your reading:

- Try to follow the news about your country in our newspapers.
- Make a collection of articles you find interesting.
- Underline the key vocabulary and expressions in the articles.
- Practise using your dictionary.
- Time your reading: can you read ten pages in an hour?
- Ask yourself three general questions about an article or story before reading – then see if you can find the answers.
- Read articles and stories and try to remember ten important facts.
- Read the first lines of every paragraph of an article and guess the general idea.
- Don't worry if you don't understand every word.  
Don't use a dictionary while you are reading – guess the word/phrase and check it afterwards.

## Placement Testing

On arrival, you will be given a short test to assess your English language level. The test will involve reading, writing, listening and speaking. The aim of the test is to place you in a suitable class with the correct level of learning.

## Learning Support

If you have any **Special Educational Needs**, please tell us before you arrive so that we can support you as much as possible.

You can also speak to your **Programme Manager or your Teacher** when you arrive if you need extra help with anything in the classroom.



# English Outside the Classroom

It's great to speak English in the classroom with your teacher, but it's also important to use your English skills during activities and excursions!

**Here are some ways that you can practise your English outside the classroom:**

- **Speak to the campus staff and other residents** – the catering staff and meal times is a perfect opportunity
- If you visit some shops, this can also be a great place to practise some English.  
**Ask the shop assistants questions** if you need to, and **be polite!**  
**Look around you!** Are there new words you can see that you don't understand?
- Take a photo and ask your teacher in your next lesson, or ask an Activity Leader.  
**Listen!** Can you hear people speaking in English? Can you understand what they are talking about?
- Can you hear if they have an English accent, or something different?  
**Ask** if you don't understand!
- **Talk** to your friends in english, Oxford Spires staff – everyone!
- 

**Practice makes perfect!**





# Activities & Excursions

At Oxford Spires International we want you to have fun, speak lots of English and experience life in the UK as much as possible!

That is why it is very important to us that when you are not in the classroom, you are participating in activities which will develop your language skills, encourage you to communicate with others, and teach you more about UK history and culture.

You will receive your weekly timetable when you arrive.

## Activities

Our fantastic city locations mean that we can visit the town many times every week to play games, explore, and visit museums, colleges and other interesting places. Sometimes we also have activities at the park or at the school.

Examples of activities include: sports and games, quidditch, paparazzi, selfie challenges, teambuilding games, visiting museums and colleges, and walking tours.

## Day Trips

As well as visiting local places of interest and exploring the beautiful city, your timetable may also include day trips each week to explore other places.

During your stay, you might visit: London, Bath, Stratford-upon-Avon, Oxford, Cambridge or many other beautiful and historical places nearby!

## Evenings

We will organise evening activities such as games, competitions and visits.





# Keeping Safe

In general, Britain is a very safe place to visit, and celebrates being a multicultural and diverse country. However, **it is important to be careful and responsible**, especially when we visit big cities such as London.

## ALWAYS:

- ✓ Listen to instructions from your teachers, activity leaders and group leaders
- ✓ Ask if you do not understand
- ✓ Close your bag
- ✓ Cross the road at pedestrian crossings. Be careful of cars and bikes! (**Don't forget!** In England, we drive on the left-hand side of the road!)
- ✓ Drink lots of water – it is especially important when you are playing sport, walking around, and if the weather is very hot
- ✓ Tell people where you are going if you are travelling alone

## NEVER:

- ✗ Leave the group without permission
- ✗ ring lots of money, or expensive phones and cameras with you
- ✗ Leave your bag open or out of your sight

If you are lost, you can always phone the emergency number and we will help you.

**+44 (0) 1865 800 290**

If there is an emergency, stay with the group and listen to your teachers. If you are not with the group, go to a safe place and ask for help, or phone 999.

Please tell us where you are; phone the emergency number – and we will help you.

# What to Bring

Don't forget that English weather can be very unpredictable. It could be beautiful sunshine one day and cold thunderstorms the next!

**Check the weather report before you come ([bbc.co.uk/weather](http://bbc.co.uk/weather)).**

**We recommend that you bring the following:**

## Clothing

- Enough underwear and socks for one week
- Comfortable shoes
- Pyjamas
- Enough clothes for one week
- Jumper or hoodie
- Clothes for sport
- Sun hat / baseball cap and pair of sunglasses
- Waterproof coat or jacket/winter coat (depending when you visit us!)
- Umbrella

**The staff in the residences will help you to use the laundry facilities once a week.**

## Toiletries

- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Deodorant
- Soap/ shower gel
- Shampoo and conditioner
- Hair brush/ comb
- Sun cream if you are visiting us in the summer (sometimes it is sunny in England!)
- Sanitary towels/ tampons
- Wash cloth and towel

## Money

- Weekly pocket money in Pound Sterling (we recommend approximately £100 per week for shopping, souvenirs, and snacks).
- Laundry: £3 per wash and £2 per dry

## Miscellaneous

- Passport and visa, travel tickets, **consent to travel form**
- Electronic devices and chargers – camera, phone (*please note that the school is not responsible for lost or damaged items. We do not recommend bringing expensive electronic devices*)
- UK plug adaptors
- A bag that **closes**, preferably a backpack. You will need to carry your packed lunch on excursion days.
- A reusable water bottle
- Medicine you regularly take
- Prescribed medication. **You must tell your group leader if you are taking prescribed medication. Please make sure that the correct dosage is written in English.** The correct dose will be distributed to you at the times indicated by your doctor.

## DO NOT Bring

### List of forbidden items:

Oxford Spires International has a **zero tolerance** policy for students to have or use of any of these items:

- ✗ Tobacco/cigarettes
- ✗ Alcohol
- ✗ Illegal drugs/'Legal highs'
- ✗ Blades, firearms, air guns, replica firearms or any other form of weapon
- ✗ Poisonous/corrosive liquids
- ✗ Flares, lighters or candles, pepper spray, explosives
- ✗ Clothes irons and cooking equipment

If we think you have one of these items, we might search your room.

If we find any forbidden items, we will follow our disciplinary procedure with you and you may be sent home.

Please see the school rules and our disciplinary procedure on pages 25 and 26.

## Lost Property

If you believe that you have lost any of your belongings while at Bedford School, please speak to your Group Leader or your Programme Manager.

If you realise, once returning home, that you have left belongings at Bedford School, please contact us (info@oxfordspires.education) as soon as possible.

Any unclaimed lost property will be kept for 1 month, then given to charity.



# Residential Accommodation

Please read the following information carefully:

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During your stay, it is important to remember that some things may be different in England to in your own country. This is a fantastic opportunity for you to experience a new culture and experience life in a different way to what you might be used to!

## Food

Food in the UK will probably be different to the food in your country, and this is part of experiencing a new culture. We encourage you to be flexible and try new things!

In Britain, we usually eat our main meal in the evenings, and this may be earlier than you are used to. Dinner time is a great opportunity to speak to your teachers and fellow students and practise your English. If you have any allergies, please tell us **in advance** and speak to the Centre Manager when you arrive.

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## Bathroom

Please do not stand on the toilet, and always leave the bathroom clean after you use it. You must always put toilet paper in the toilet and nothing else. Sanitary products should go in the bin, **not** the toilet.

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## Bedroom

Please be respectful to the school cleaners and keep your bedroom TIDY! If your bedroom is untidy, it will be difficult to clean. Please do not eat in your bedroom. Oxford Spires staff will sometimes check your bedroom to see if it is clean and tidy.

## Cleaning & Laundry

Your bed linen will be changed and your room will be cleaned weekly; the common areas will be cleaned daily. You can wash your clothes once each week using school washing machines. We will tell you which day, and how to use the machines, when you arrive at the residence. There is a small charge to use the machines, which is approximately £3 per wash and £2 per dry.

**Remember to bring a towel because these are not supplied in residence!**

## Good manners!

In Britain, “**please**” and “**thank you**” are the most important words to learn!

Remember to always say “please” and “thank you” at school, especially at meal times.

# Residential Rules

Living in a residence is a great way to meet new friends! Don't forget, you are representing your family, your country and the school with your behaviour at the residence.

Please read the residence rules carefully.

- We expect our students to be polite and respectful at all times.
- Keep your bedroom tidy and leave the bathroom clean.
- Girls and boys accommodation at the residence is separate. Boys must not enter girls' bedrooms and girls must not enter boys' bedrooms.
- Do not eat in your bedroom. You may drink water, but no hot or fizzy drinks are allowed in your room.
- No smoking, drugs or alcohol are permitted at any time during your stay with Oxford Spires International.
- Do not touch fire equipment in the school unless in an emergency.
- Unless there is an emergency, we ask students to stay in their bedrooms after "lights out."
- Be respectful of school property and other people's property.
- Respect your fellow students (and the Oxford Spires staff!) and do not make too much noise in your bedroom. If you want to socialise with friends, use the social areas such as the common room.
- Your bedroom key is **your** responsibility. If you lose it, you will need to pay for a new one.

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If you break any of these rules, Oxford Spires staff will follow the Disciplinary Procedure on page 26.

## Any questions or problems?

Your group leader and our staff will be very happy to help if you have any questions or problems about your accommodation. Any questions or problems, please phone +44(0) 1865 800 290.



# School Rules

Follow these rules and have a happy, safe and enjoyable stay in the U.K.

## Your English Classes

- You must come to your English classes every day
- If you are ill, or have a problem, tell your Group Leader or Programme Manager
- You must come to your classes at the correct time – do not be late!
- Always listen to your teacher
- Respect your teacher and the other students in your class
- Always speak English in class
- Do not be disruptive in class

## The Activity Programme

- You must come to all the activities and excursions on your programme
- If you are ill, or have a problem, tell your Group Leader or Programme Manager
- You must come to activities and excursions on time – do not be late!
- Respect Spires staff, Group Leaders and other students
- Always listen carefully to instructions given to you by Spires staff

## Residential Rules

- You must never leave the college campus alone or with friends
- You can only leave the college campus with Spires staff or with your Group Leader if they have permission from the Programme Manager to take you out
- You must be quiet in your residence bedrooms in the evenings
- The lights in your bedroom should be switched off by 11pm

## If You Break These Rules

- You will be excluded from the activity programme and/or your English classes
- You will have to explain to the Spires Programme Manager
- Spires will telephone your parents or your agent
- You will have to explain to your parents or agent
- You may have to return home early and your parents will have to pay



# Disciplinary Procedure

## What happens if I break the rules?

If you break any of the School Rules or Residential Rules, a member of staff will talk to you about what happened and why your behaviour is unacceptable.

If you behave very badly, or repeat bad behaviour, we will use the following sanctions:

**1. First Warning** – the Centre Manager will give you a verbal first warning and you may lose some free

time/participation in an activity.

**2. Second Warning** – the Centre Manager will give you written second warning and they will tell your parents/agent about the situation. You may also lose some free time or miss an activity or excursion.

**3. Final Warning** – the Centre Manager and Head of Operations will give you a final written warning which says that you will be immediately sent home if you repeat the unacceptable behaviour. You may also lose some free time or miss an activity or excursion.

**4. Expulsion** – your family must pay for you to return home immediately.

*If your behaviour is very serious, you may not be given any warnings before we speak to your parents or send you home.*

# Student Curfews

The curfews below apply to both residential. All visiting students are expected to follow the curfew expectations.

**In Building Curfew (Residential Accommodation):** 9pm/9:30pm

**In Room Curfew:** 10:45pm

**Lights Out:** by 11pm to encourage a good night's sleep.

If you miss curfew, the Residential Team will activate Oxford Spires' Missing Students Procedure and contact your Group Leader/Parents.

**In-Building Curfew:** You are required to be inside the Residential Building at the listed times above.

**In-Room Curfew:** You are required to be in your assigned room at the listed time above. Curfew checks will take place during this time. Curfew checks consist of Spires staff checking every room to ensure you are in your room. You are asked to remain in their assigned rooms from 11pm until 6:30am the next morning. There shall be no door propping or moving between rooms after 11pm.

**Overnight Hours:** During overnight hours (11pm until 6am), no noise may reach beyond the individual rooms. You should not create unreasonable, excessively loud, irritating, or disturbing noise in the residence halls at any time.

# Visa Support

You will need entry clearance (a visa) if you are a visa national. A visa national is a national or citizen of certain countries that require a visa to come to the United Kingdom.

The type of visa required is a Short-term study visa. You **should not** apply for a Tier 4 Student or Tier 4 (Child) Student Visa.

To come to the United Kingdom as a child visitor you must be able to show that you:

- Are genuinely seeking entry as a child visitor for a limited period not exceeding 6 months and your parent/guardian agrees to you travelling.  
Do not intend to seek private medical treatment during the visit (other than in an emergency).
- Do not intend to take employment in the United Kingdom.  
Are under the age of 18.
- Can demonstrate that suitable arrangements have been made for travel to and from the United Kingdom and that reception and care in the United Kingdom have been arranged for the duration of the stay.
- Have a parent or guardian in your home country or country of habitual residence who is responsible for your care.

To assist with the visa application, Oxford Spires will provide a Visa Support Letter, once we have received the deposit payment. The Visa Support Letter will contain the following information:

- Your full name and date of birth
- Passport number and date of expiry
- The start and finish dates of the course and the full address of the school at which you will be staying
- Confirmation that the course is residential with all meals included, confirmation that all English lessons and activities are included

The Visa Support Letter will be sent by email once we have received the deposit payment. Oxford Spires can arrange for the original letter to be sent by courier (at a charge of £50).

Please check with your Embassy if you need to provide the original letter or if an emailed copy is sufficient.

It is important to note that depending on the country, visa applications can take around 20 working days (or 3-4 weeks). If a visa is required, you are advised to begin the visa application process as early as possible.

Once the visa is obtained, Oxford Spires will need to receive a scanned copy of your passport and the visa by e-mail.

Please note, if you are unable to obtain your visa, then provided we receive a valid visa refusal letter, Oxford Spires will issue a full refund minus £50 admin fee (Please refer to our terms and conditions).

The visa application must be made with sufficient time prior to the arrival date as indicated by the **UKVI**, all necessary documentation must be provided as indicated by the **UKVI**, and your parent/guardian must be able to demonstrate that all necessary steps were taken to obtain the correct visa. No refund will be given if any of these criteria are not met.

For more information on applying for a visa see <https://www.gov.uk/study-visit-visa>

# Departure Procedure

On the departure day, Oxford Spires staff will wake you up and ensure you have all your belongings ready for your flight. You will either depart by taxi or if arriving with a group, by a coach transfer.

If you are an Unaccompanied Minor and/or travelling by taxi, an Oxford Spires representative will accompany you from the school to the airport terminal on the departure date.

It is recommended to arrive at check-in at least 2 hours before the scheduled departure (for some destinations and long-haul flights we may allow up to 3 hours).

For all Unaccompanied Minors and solo travellers, an Oxford Spires representative will assist that child with the check-in procedure, before taking them to the security point.

Some airlines require online check-in prior to departure to guarantee a flight booking. It is your parent's responsibility to check the policy with the airline.

Where online check-in is offered as an option, we recommend that parents do the online check-in, as this can save time once at the airport on the departure date.

If possible, any registration documents, e-tickets or boarding passes should be given to you prior to travelling to the UK. If this is not possible, we can assist with printing off any required documents if they are emailed to the office during your child's stay.

# Parent Transfer

**Arrival:** For those parents or guardians who are bringing their children to the centre, we ask that parents aim to arrive at the school between 11.00 and 14.00 on the arrival day. When arriving at centre please follow the signs for the school office where there will be staff available to meet and check-in our new students.

**Departure:** Please let us know in advance if you will be collecting your child(ren) from the centre at the end of their stay. Please note the place for picking up your child is the School Office. We recommend that you aim to arrive in the morning to collect your child between 9:00 and 11:00.





## Cultural Traits

There will be many aspects of British behaviour which seem very strange to your culture. For example the English in particular have a reputation for being reserved. This means that they are quite quiet in their public behaviour and like to keep their emotions private.

For example on public transport people do not usually talk to strangers. Within our own culture we feel secure as we can easily interpret the things around us.

Unfortunately, this can result in judging outsiders by our own standards which in turn can cause prejudice and stereotyping. Keeping an open mind is essential to benefiting from your time here.

## Culture Shock

Culture shock is similar to the feeling of strangeness we might have when we are adapting to a new school or other environment, only more so.

When people are surrounded by a different culture, where everything (including the language) is new and potentially confusing, they go through changes of mood and attitude before coming to terms with their new environment.

These feelings of alienation can be caused by relatively minor things such as unfamiliar food; differences in routine; differences in travel arrangements and unfamiliar official procedures. They can be made worse by the deeper cultural differences in languages.

Many students are initially excited and positive about the new culture. But as the reality of deeper cultural differences sinks in, this excited feeling wears away.

We may then start to miss friends, family and places as we begin to have doubts about ourselves and our new environment.

You should not let the differences distress you. 'Reserve' should not be seen as unfriendliness as you will find that most British people are happy to help you if you have a problem or need some information.

## Language

You may have difficulty in understanding spoken English no matter what level of proficiency you have achieved in your country. You will be listening to and speaking in English all the time and this will certainly make you feel tired.

Misunderstandings and mistakes are easily made when you are tired and others are speaking too fast.

Do

not feel frustrated or depressed if you cannot contribute to conversations as you can in your own language.

Using a second language throughout the day takes a great deal of effort and may sometimes seem too intense an experience. These feelings are perfectly normal and things will improve as you get used to the situation.

# Time Differences

During British Summer Time (BST), the following are time differences:

Country	Time	Country	Time
Hong Kong	7 hours ahead	Russia	2 hours ahead
India	4.5 hours ahead	Western Europe	1 hour ahead
Indonesia	6 hours ahead	Mexico	6 hours ahead
Japan	8 hours ahead	USA (East Coast)	5 hours behind
South Korea	8 hours ahead	China	7 hours behind

# International Calls

There is WiFi available for internet calls using communication apps. If you have any problem accessing the internet please contact the course office.

We advise you to call home on your arrival evening to ensure that your parents do not worry about you. International calls are cheaper at weekends or between 18:00 and 08:00, Monday - Friday.

# International Dialling Codes

During British Summer Time (BST), the following are time differences:

Country	Code	Country	Code	Country	Code	Country	Code
Austria	0043	Germany	0049	Malaysia	0060	Spain	0034
Belgium	0032	Greece	0030	Mexico	0052	Sweden	0046
China	0086	Hong Kong	00852	Netherlands	0031	Switzerland	0041
Cyprus	00357	Italy	0039	Nigeria	00234	Taiwan	00886
Czech Republic	00420	India	0091	Norway	0047	Thailand	0066
Denmark	0045	Indonesia	0062	Pakistan	0092	Turkey	0090
Finland	00358	Japan	0081	Portugal	00351	Ukraine	00380
France	0033	South Korea	0082	Russia	007	USA	001

Do not dial the first '0' of your city code (except Russia and Italy).

# Fire Evacuation Procedures

There are notices in the classrooms, the student residence and other areas that outline the action to take in the event of a fire and where to obtain First Aid.

Please read them carefully and make sure that you understand what to do.

## If you discover a fire:

1. Immediately raise the alarm – either activate the nearest fire alarm button or inform the nearest member of staff.
2. Only if it is possible and safe to do:
  - A. Call the Fire Brigade by dialling **999 (in the UK the emergency number is 999)**
  - B. Give the Operator your telephone number and ask for '**FIRE**'
  - C. When asked to give the address give the name distinctly '**FIRE AT BEDFORD SCHOOL ON DE PARYS AVENUE**'
  - D. Do not replace the receiver until the address has been repeated and confirmed by the Operator

## If you hear the fire alarm:

3. You **MUST** assume that there is a fire and evacuate your classroom immediately and in an orderly fashion.
4. Report to the designated assembly point.
5. Close the classroom door as you leave.
6. If you are in a classroom adjacent to a toilet, the teacher will check to see that anyone in the toilet has also evacuated.
7. Evacuation should be via the **NEAREST AVAILABLE EXIT**. This may not be the one most commonly used.
8. At the **Assembly Point** (this will be indicated on the Fire Notice inside the building) the Teacher should take a roll of all pupils known to be in the classroom when the alarm was sounded.
9. Upon completion of the register the Teacher should inform the **Programme Manager** that all pupils are present and accounted for.
10. No one should return to the building until directed to do so by the **Fire Brigade** and the **Programme Manager**.

**DO NOT TAKE RISKS**

**DO NOT STOP TO COLLECT PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

**DO NOT RE-ENTER THE BUILDING**

**DO NOT USE LIFTS**



# Health & Safety Policy

At Oxford Spires International, we understand the importance of ensuring that systems are in place for checking that our setting is a safe and secure place for children, staff and other visitors.

## Our Health and Safety Policy aims to:

- Prevent accidents and cases of work-related ill health and provide adequate control of health and safety risks arising from work activities;
- Provide adequate training to ensure employees are competent to do their work;
- Engage and consult with employees on day-to-day health and safety conditions and provide advice and supervision on occupational health;
- Implement emergency procedures – evacuation in case of fire or other significant incident;
- Maintain safe and healthy working conditions, provide and maintain, equipment and ensure safe storage / use of equipment

## Procedures

- Fire evacuation drills to be carried out at least once a week in conjunction with partner Colleges where necessary;
- Log to be kept of drills;
- All staff members to be made aware of assembly points and procedures during their initial induction;
- All students to be made aware of procedures during first day orientation;
- Fire risk assessments to take place as legally required;
- All fire exits and signage to comply with legal codes of practice;
- A risk assessment to be carried out annually in the winter of each year, action plan put forward as a result and remedial action taken in cases of hazard;
- All potential hazards or problems liable to affect the health and wellbeing of staff to be reported to the relevant member of staff and recorded in the log book;
- No member of staff should administer drugs of any description to students;
- Sanitary bins to be regularly emptied by approved contractors.
- All staff given Fire Safety and Health and Safety training upon arrival;
- Any emergency problems to be referred to one of the school's certified first aiders;
- Accident book to be kept at reception;
- First Aid kit to be kept appropriately stocked at all times and kept at reception.

In the event of students requesting medical attention, all requests should be passed to the course office and ideally one of the nominated people responsible for first aid.

Members of the centre team will assess the situation and present the following options, depending on the situation:

1. Book an appointment with a doctor
2. Call NHS Direct
3. Visit an emergency health centre
4. Visit the nearest local hospital A&E department
5. Contact the emergency services and call an ambulance

Depending on the circumstances, the office team may offer to pay for a taxi to the doctor's/ hospital and will also offer to accompany the student there together with any visiting Group Leader.

## Safeguarding

**The term 'safeguarding' refers to the protection of children;** this includes protecting them from physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and radicalisation.

In the UK, we have certain laws in place to ensure the adequate protection of children. Oxford Spires International has its own safeguarding policy based on these laws, which we expect all of our staff (including group leaders) to uphold. Your cooperation and attention to safeguarding issues is particularly important as you may come into contact with other students who are not in your group.

As part of British safeguarding procedures, every adult who has a role involving responsibility for or substantial access to under 18s will have a **police check (DBS), including group leaders.**

Safeguarding encompasses all areas of the safety and welfare of our students. Some issues that might arise while you are with us include homesickness, bullying, general health and wellbeing, and that they are eating properly and drinking enough water.

### **Oxford Spires International exercises this duty through employing the following:**

- All members of staff working with children are required to undertake appropriate safeguarding training relevant to their role, including Prevent Duty, to ensure that they have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues, are able to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity, and know how to respond in a timely and appropriate way;
- Each setting has a named Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who has undertaken safeguarding lead training in line with the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board;
- To prevent the employment of unsuitable individuals, all staff at Oxford Spires International are employed in line with the Safer Recruitment procedures;
- The use of mobile phones and cameras by all adults at settings is strictly controlled. This is covered in the Mobile Phones and Cameras policies;

- Staff will seek to build children's resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British Values, in order to provide a safe environment which allows children to discuss sensitive or controversial issues openly;
- All sites within the Oxford Spires International network are separately risk assessed from a safeguarding perspective before any programme commences;  
To complete and regularly update a Welfare Risk Assessment which outlines procedures in place to
- minimise risk to under 18s in a mixed age environment and additional welfare provision in place for all students – this should be conducted for each centre and any residential accommodation.

In UK law we protect a number of minority groups so they **cannot be discriminated against** because of their sex, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, culture/nationality. Please help us to uphold these fundamental principles.

**If you have a concern about a safeguarding issue please speak to the Programme Manager.**

## Student Activity Board

The main way in which you will be able to see what Activities you are doing each day is via the **Activity Board**. This will usually be located either in the school social area or outside the classrooms.

It is **very** important that you take a few minutes to read the Activity Board **each day**, as it will contain a lot of useful information that they may need to know.

The **Activity Board** will include:

- The day of the week and date;
- Brief Weather Forecast for the day i.e. 22 degrees Celsius with possible rain;
- A section of the board broken up into Morning, Afternoon and Evening, and within each of these sections:
  - › Which activity will be running at each time of day;
  - › Which groups will be participating i.e. Group 1 and Group 4 for morning excursion;
  - › Which Spires Activity Leader will be leading the Activity;
  - › How long the Activity will last for.
- Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner times;
- Any reminders for tomorrow i.e. if it's Excursion Day tomorrow, what the students will need to bring; if there are any students or staff arriving or leaving tomorrow; any planned fire drills etc.

Your Programme Manager will up date the Activity Board each day by 8:30am, and will remind you to look at it after breakfast. If you have any questions about the Activity Board, please ask your Group Leader or your Programme Manager.



# FAQs

## What if I am unwell?

If you are unwell, tell your group leader, or a member of staff and they will help you. If it is necessary, we can take you to a local doctor or dentist.

## What if I miss home?

Our friendly and supportive staff are available to speak to you if you have any problems. If you are missing home, come and chat to us. You are never alone at Oxford Spires International. We are all here to help you!

## Is there Wi-Fi?

Yes, there is Wi-Fi in all schools and accommodation. We will give the necessary passwords when you arrive. Please note that some Wi-Fi areas may restrict the sites that you are able to visit, for example, occasionally some social media sites are blocked due to the host school's internet policies.

**Please speak to the school staff or your Group Leader about safety online and see the school noticeboards for tips and advice.**

## How often can I phone home?

We understand the importance of staying in touch with your family and we will never stop you from phoning home during suitable and convenient times. **However, please remember that constant contact may prevent you from fully immersing yourself in the Easter Programme, and could actually make you feel more homesick.**

Phone calls through Skype, FaceTime or WhatsApp are usually the most reliable ways to contact home. If this is not possible, speak to a member of staff or your host family who will be able to help you.

## How do I study in the UK long-term?

If you would like to continue your studies in the UK, you can speak to an Educational Travel Organiser or Educational Consultant in your home country. They will be able to tell you about your options, the application process, the academic requirements, and the fees.

Speak to a member of Head Office staff and they will be able to help you find a representative in your home country.

## Will my bank card work?

Check that your bank card has one of the following symbols on the back: Cirrus, Maestro or Visa (Plus). Most UK bank machines (ATMs) will accept cards using these networks. If you are not sure, ask your home bank. Also, make sure you tell your home bank that you will be using your bank card abroad, otherwise they might stop your card from working.

The majority of ATMs are easy to use and let you take money out without any charges, but if you're not sure, ask a member of staff and they will be happy to help you.

# Problems

We hope you are happy here, but if you have a problem or a question, there is always someone you can talk to:

Problem	Who to Speak to
I have a problem with another student	Talk to your <b>Welfare Officer</b> or <b>Programme Manager</b>
I have a problem with an adult	Talk to your <b>Welfare Officer</b> or <b>Programme Manager</b>
I have a problem with my room	Talk to your <b>Welfare Officer</b> or <b>Programme Manager</b>
I have a problem with my class	Talk to your <b>Senior Teacher</b> or <b>Teacher</b>
I have a problem with activities or excursions	Talk to your <b>Senior Activity Leader</b>
I have a health problem	Talk to your <b>Programme Manager</b>
If you have any other problem...	Talk to your <b>Welfare Officer</b> or <b>Programme Manager</b>

# Medical Support

If you require medical attention for any reason you should contact your Programme Manager in the first instance.

**SERIOUS ILLNESSES/INJURIES SHOULD ALWAYS  
BE REFERRED STRAIGHT TO A HOSPITAL, OR CALL 999.**

## OUT OF HOURS SUPPORT

The local **NHS Walk-In Centre** can be found at:

**Address:** Bedford Hospital, South Wing, Kempston Road, Bedford, MK42 9DJ.

**Contact:** Tel. 01234 355 122

**Opening times:** Monday – Sunday 10:00-22:30

## EMERGENCY/HOSPITAL DETAILS

Call 999 and ask for the Ambulance Service

Accident and Emergency (A&E)

Bedford Hospital,

South Wing, Kempston Road,

Bedford, MK42 9DJ.

# Really Useful Expressions

We focus on helping you learn really **useful** English. Here is a collection of everyday expressions. Some you will hear, others you can use.

In School	With Friends
Where can I find...? Is anyone sitting there? What does...mean? Does anyone know who/where/when...? Let me give you a hand Compare your answers with your partner Sorry, I haven't finished yet Here's my homework Which room am I in? Sorry, I didn't catch what you said Could you say that again, please? I'll give it to you tomorrow Can I have a word with you, please?	See you later See you tomorrow Give me a call later What are you doing tonight? How long have you been here? Hello again Is this your first time in England? How long are you staying here? Are you going to the pub/cinema tonight? What time shall we meet up? Where are you from? Do you want to play football later? Let's sit together
The Weather	Food
It looks like it's going to rain It's pouring down It's (freezing) cold today It's (boiling) hot What's the forecast for tomorrow? Wow, it's hot Do I need an umbrella? Let's go outside It's a lovely day It's quite breezy today	This is delicious/very nice What's in this? How do you make this? Can I have some more/seconds, please? I'd love a cup of coffee/tea, please What's this dish called? I'm allergic to... No thanks, I'm full Help yourself to... What's for supper tonight?
Activities & Sports	Excursions
How do you play this? What are the rules? It's my turn Can I have a go? Good shot I can/can't swim	Where are we going? How far is it? Are we going by coach? Where are the nearest toilets, please? Where/when are we meeting up again? Can I take photos? Can I use flash?

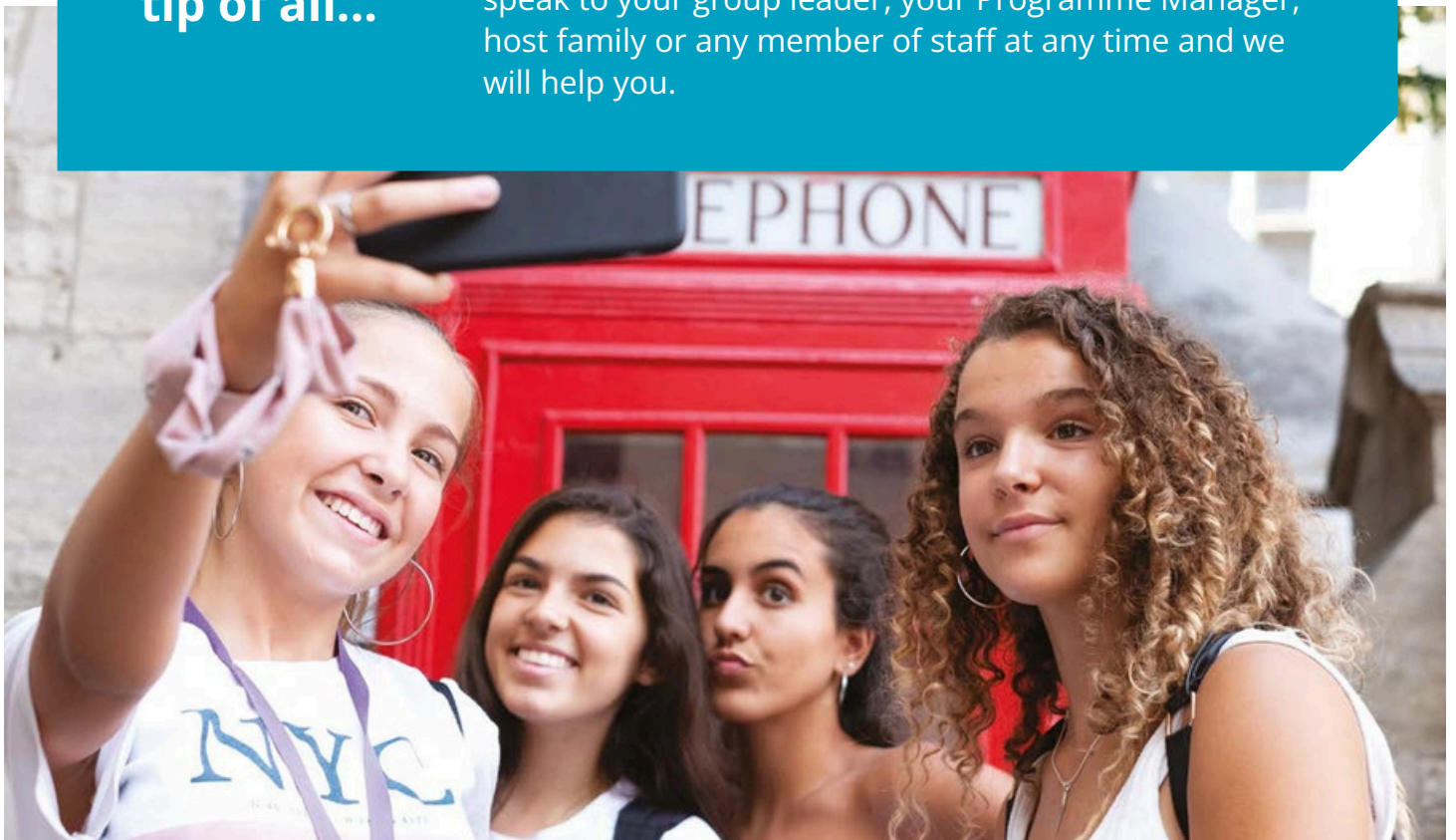
# Our Advice to You

- **Everybody will be a little scared when they first arrive!** Be kind and understanding towards yourself and others.
- **Be yourself!**
- **Speak in English!** If you always speak in English, you are more likely to meet new people from other countries, and you will make more friends!
- **Explore** the common areas of school and introduce yourself to other students. See what similar interests you have, and what you can learn from them.
- **Chat** to the Oxford Spires staff. They are here to look after you and make you feel safe and happy.
- **Listen** to information, and **don't be afraid to ask questions** if you don't understand something.
- It's important to contact home, but try to decide **ONE** time to do this every day. If you spend all your time looking at your phone, you will miss the fun!
- **Keep busy!** Participate in your classes and activities with a positive attitude.

## The most important tip of all...

You are never alone at Oxford Spires International! There is always someone there to support you.

If you are feeling sad, scared, homesick or worried, speak to your group leader, your Programme Manager, host family or any member of staff at any time and we will help you.





# General Information

## Contacting your child

Your child will usually have access to Wi-Fi on their phones every day during school breaks and lunch times. They will contact you to tell you that they have arrived safely.

We understand that you will be thinking of your child and will want to know how they are getting on. However, it is important that the child immerses themselves in the course; too many calls home can disrupt this process and potentially increase feelings of homesickness.

## Contacting the school

Please refer to the next page for all school contact details. We will contact you immediately if your child suffers more than a very minor illness/injury. Please note that we are unable to give daily, personal updates on students.

## Pocket Money

The Oxford Spires course is all-inclusive. During their stay with us, students will have three freshly-prepared meals a day, and drinking water is always available.

Students will therefore only need money to buy souvenirs during excursions. A good idea is to bring a pre-loaded credit or debit card as they will have access to ATM machines in the town centre.

The amount of pocket money is, of course, your choice but we would recommend no more than £100 per week. Please note that we cannot look after any money or valuables, and your child is therefore responsible for any money or expensive items they choose to bring with them.

For reasons of safety, and to promote equality among students, we ask that your child is not given more than £100 per week to spend.

## Deliberate Damage

Please note that we reserve the right to ask you to cover damage to school or homestay property caused by deliberate action or gross negligence, which is the clear fault of your child.

## Consent and important information sharing

Please ensure that you have completed the online consent form before your child arrives. We require your permission for your child to have unsupervised free time with their friends, to take photos of your child, and to treat your child in a medical situation.

## Allergies, Educational Needs, and Special Requests

We will do everything we can to accommodate your child at Oxford Spires International. Please inform us in advance, through the online consent form, if your child has any specific health problems, food allergies or learning requirements.

Please note that we need to know about food allergies and special access requests at least two weeks before your child arrives.

## Keeping Safe

Your child's safety is our top priority. We plan our activities and excursions in advance and have risk assessments for everything we do. We train all of our staff to care effectively for the students, and many have first aid training.

Please help us to keep your child safe by reading the school and host family/residence rules with them before they arrive and ensuring they understand.

Please also ensure that that they do not bring forbidden items (page 22), and that they have the emergency number saved to their phone (see below). Thank you for your support.

## Contact Details

### Oxford Spires International Head Office

**General email:** [info@oxfordspires.education](mailto:info@oxfordspires.education)

(from 09.00 – 17.00 UK time), Monday to Friday

+44 (0) 1865 800 290

### Designated Safeguarding Lead:

Josh Mair

[josh@oxfordspires.education](mailto:josh@oxfordspires.education)

or +44 (0) 1865 800 290

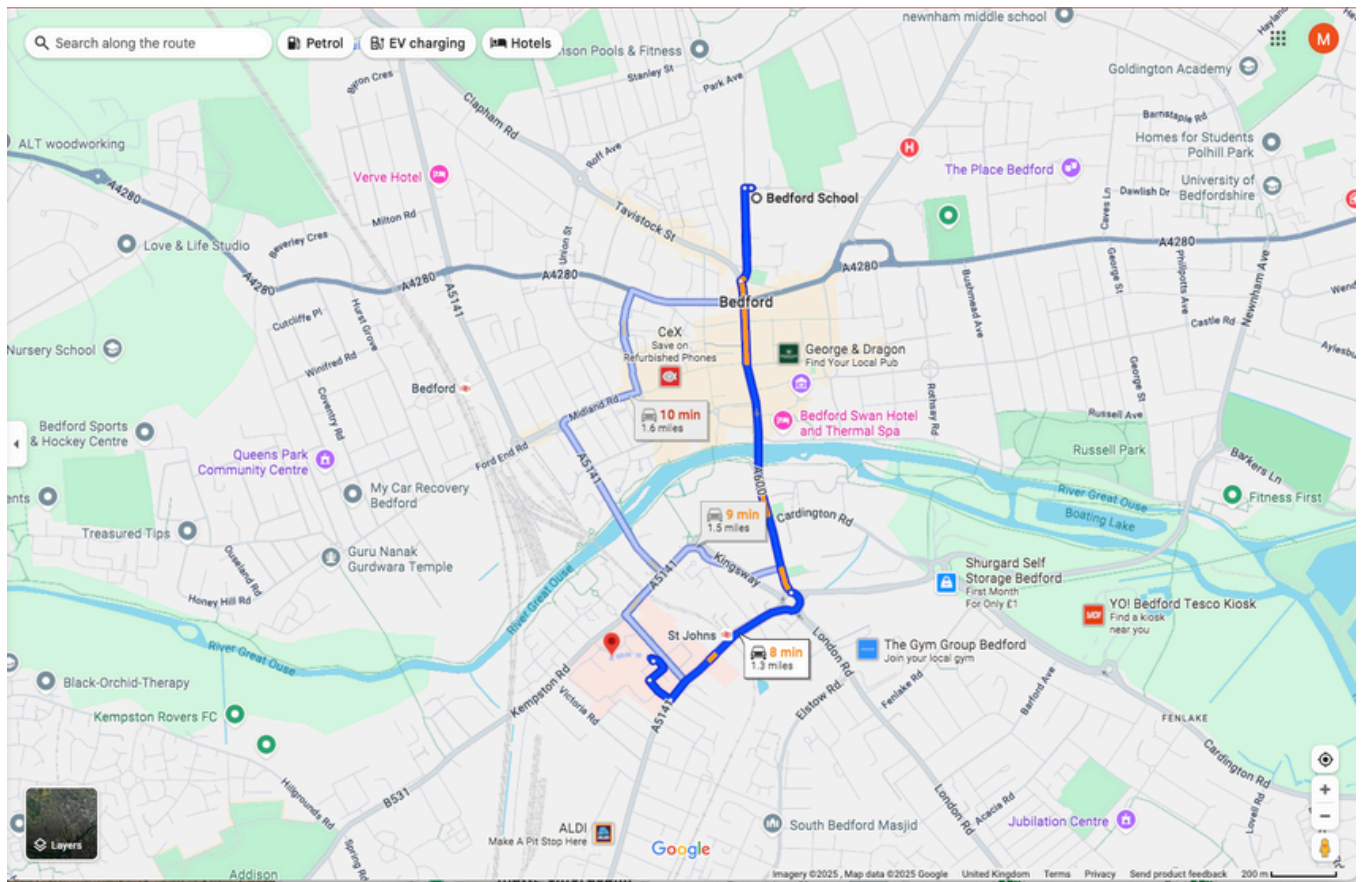
### Out-of-Hours Emergency Contact (please call only in case of emergency):

**+44 (0) 1865 800 290**

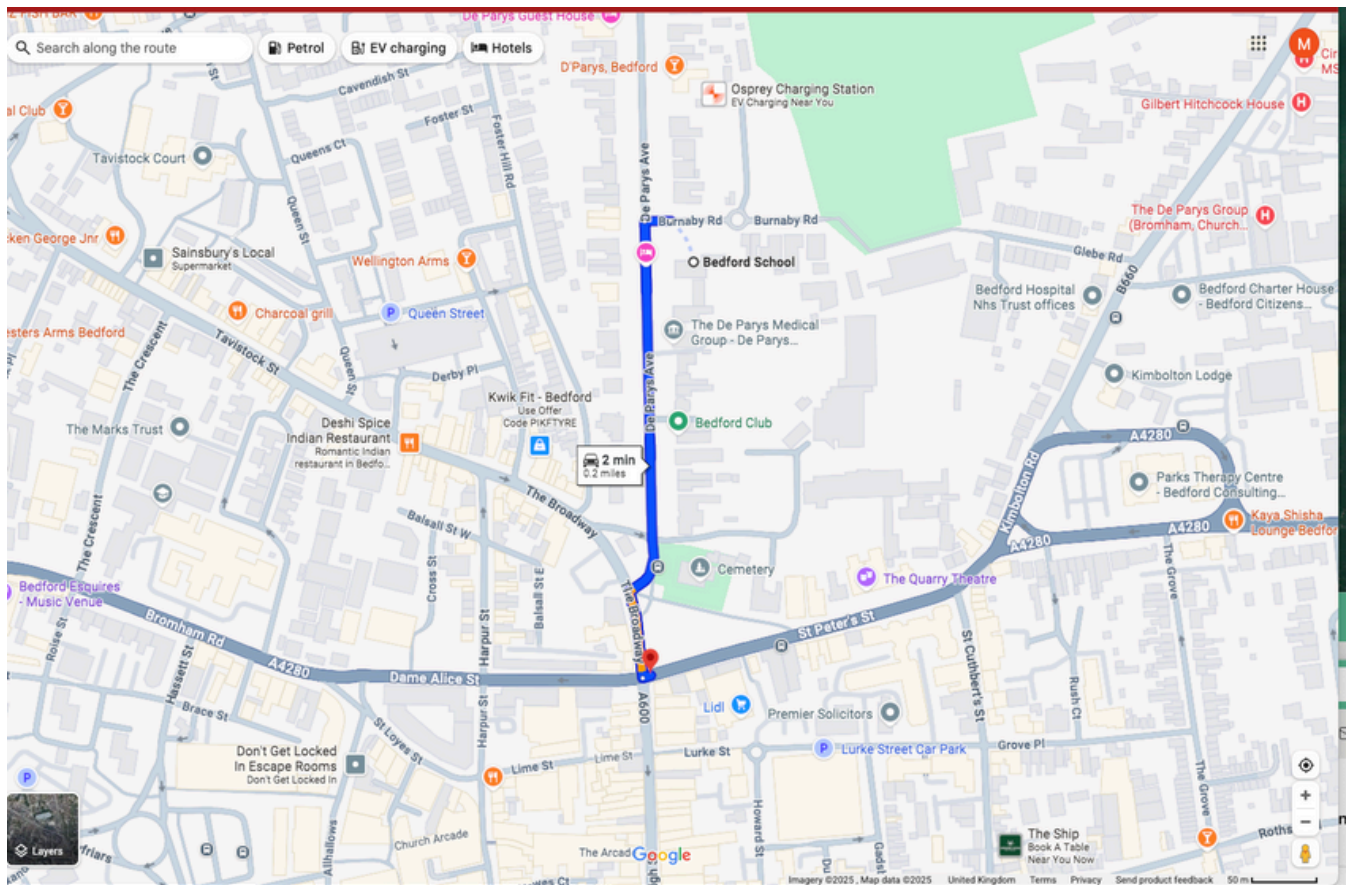
### Social Links:



# Map – to Bedford Hospital



# Map – to Bedford City Centre





# Resources for Parents

## Our Website

Our website is [www.oxfordspires.education](http://www.oxfordspires.education). Here you will find plenty of information on our courses, the cities where the courses take place, the school facilities, prices and dates, and general information about Oxford Spires International.

There is also a helpful FAQ section here: [www.oxfordspires.education/faq](http://www.oxfordspires.education/faq) in case this handbook has not answered any of your questions.

## Policies & Procedures

Our school policies including behaviour policy, missing student policy, prevent policy, emergency action plan, safeguarding policy, complaints procedure, and many others are always available to parents.

In order to request access, you must write to us at: [info@oxfordspires.education](mailto:info@oxfordspires.education), and specify which policy(ies) you would like to have sent to you.

## Insurance Cover

Please note that we highly recommend that you take out our insurance cover charged at £12 per week. Without insurance, costs could arise for you in case of cancellation, your child leaving their course early, medical expenses, emergency dental treatment, personal belongings, money, personal liability, etc. We strongly recommend that all students take out coverage before travelling.

### Covid-19 Cover for International Students

#### Our Standard Insurance Policy, with regards to Covid-19, includes:

**Student health and wellbeing** – If an insured student contracts Covid-19 during their time studying in the UK, cover will remain in place for emergency medical expenses and all other standard policy cover will remain in force for the duration of your trip.

**Financial protection whilst in the UK** – If an insured student has been diagnosed with Covid-19, the policy will cover for additional expenses related to transport or accommodation if it is medically necessary that they stay in the UK beyond their scheduled return date.

**Cover for delays in returning home** – If an insured student's return home has been delayed in relation to the pandemic, the policy will be automatically extended without any charge for the period of the delay up to a maximum of **60 days**. This will allow the student to remain on cover for all sections of the insurance policy (i.e. medical cover, personal accident, baggage, personal liability or missed departure).

#### Additional Covid-19 Insurance Cover is also available, which includes:

**Covid-19 delayed return – additional travel or accommodation costs** – This section will cover up to £1,000 for reasonable additional transport or accommodation expenses incurred, if the insured student is required to self-isolate on the date that they are due to return to their home country, having been personally instructed to do so by NHS Test and Trace or the NHS COVID-19 app due to being exposed to someone who has been diagnosed with Covid-19.

**Covid-19 hospitalisation benefit** – If the insured student is admitted to hospital in the UK as an in-patient whilst on a trip during the period of cover due to their being infected with Covid-19, the

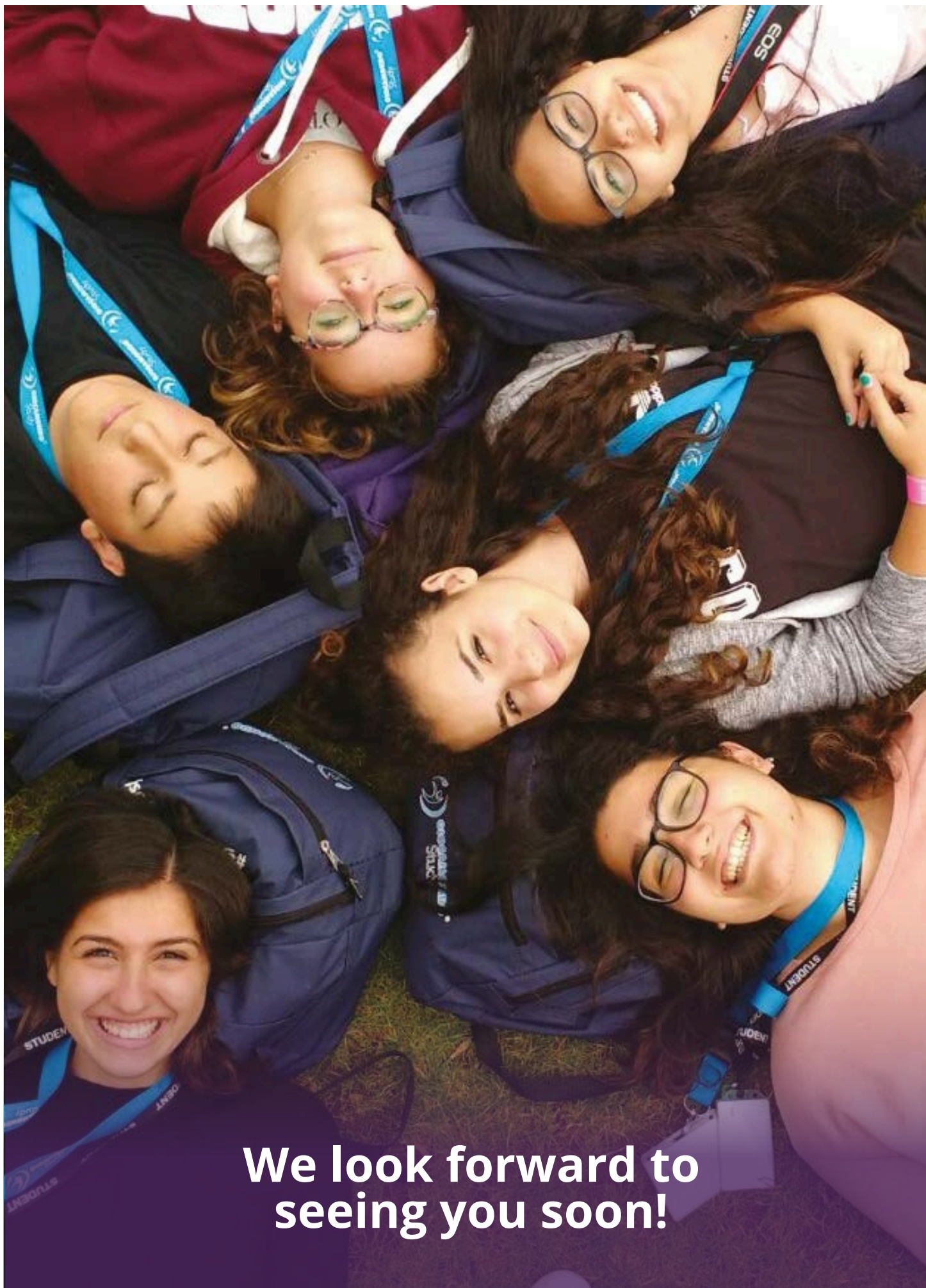
policy includes up to £100 for every complete 24 hours the remain in hospital as an in-patient, up to a maximum of £1,400 in total.

## Accreditation

Oxford Spires International is regularly inspected by the Accreditation UK unit of the BAC. The latest inspection report is available on their website by searching our school name. We are also part of English UK, a national members' association for schools in the UK promoting quality and best practice across all its members.

## Complaints & Disputes

If you or your child are unhappy at any time, whether it's with any aspect of our service, teaching, accommodation, etc. then we encourage you to speak to any member of staff as soon as possible. If the problem is not resolved, you should speak to the Managing Director. We will investigate the issue and inform you of the outcome. In the unlikely event that we are still unable to resolve the issue, you can write to the Chief Executive of English UK. All disputes are handled under UK law.



**We look forward to  
seeing you soon!**



**OXFORD SPIRES**  
INTERNATIONAL

For more information, prices and bespoke course content,  
please contact **info@oxfordspires.education**  
or call **+44 (0) 1865 800 290**

**www.oxfordspires.education**

**ALTO** Association of  
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Organisations

  
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BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL