



Welcome to the AEGIS Newsletter. AEGIS Chair, Dr Helen Wright and Executive Officer, Yasemin Wigglesworth have been busy spreading the word about AEGIS at various events. In March, we held our first joint conference with BSA which was a great success – see the first article for further details.

We look forward to many more joint ventures with BSA in the future. As ever, many thanks to everyone who has contributed to this newsletter – as always, we appreciate your support.

## Letter from the Chair

Summer is almost upon us, and with the advent too of public examination season, this is a particularly busy time for guardianship organisations who have to manage exam leave and all the comings and goings of existing international students, as well as starting to prepare for next year's brand new students.

The quality of care that guardians and schools offer together makes an enormous and positive difference to school students across the UK – so thank you on their behalf!

The partnership of schools and guardianship organisations was one of the main themes of the first ever joint BSA-AEGIS conference in March, and planning is already underway for next year's event. The main purpose of the conference was to bring together schools and guardianship organisations so that they could build relationships and understand the value each gave to international students, and it was encouraging to hear so much positive feedback about the two days. Partnership of this kind can only ever be a good thing.

Guardianship continues to rise in the national awareness, which is great to see. If you haven't already done so, please read the recently published **UK Government strategy on International Education** and note in particular for the very first time a positive reference to the importance of accredited guardianship organisations in Section 4.2. AEGIS continues to work extremely hard on behalf of guardianship organisations, schools and international students themselves to ensure high standards in the sector; thank you for your support!

We are in the process of interviewing some new Trustees, and I look forward to announcing soon the make-up of the new AEGIS Board. In the meantime, I wish you all the best for a busy but hopefully very successful summer.

**Dr Helen Wright,**  
**AEGIS Chair and International Education Advisor**



# AEGIS-BSA Conference

## UK boarding schools and guardianship providers debate sector issues

Challenges for the boarding school sector, the forthcoming review of National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, working with agents, and best practice in safeguarding international students were among the themes at a UK boarding and guardianship conference in mid-March.

Held in London, the two-day Marketing, Admissions, Guardianship and International Conference (MAGIC) was the first joint event hosted by the Boarding Schools' Association (BSA) and the Association for the Education and Guardianship of International Students (AEGIS) since their partnership was announced last year.

The forthcoming government consultation on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding was one of the main discussion points of the conference. Stuart Nicholson, Trustee of AEGIS, and Dale Wilkins, Head of Safeguarding and Standards at BSA, said that the new guidelines were likely to put more stringent guidelines in place for guardianship, but were unlikely to go as far as stipulating that an accredited guardianship organisation must be used.

They also argued that the expectations of international students can be put into much sharper focus, that schools need to be able to accept that they are sometimes not the right fit for a student, and that there "needs to be a rich understanding of what role the guardian will play".

Another threat to the independent sector comes in the shape of reforms to the teacher pension scheme which will require increased contributions from schools at 23 per cent, and threats to impose VAT on boarding school fees for domestic students – a policy that was included in the last Labour Party manifesto warned that small, community boarding schools would be the first to go under if such a policy came to fruition.



Robin Fletcher of BSA opening the conference



Julie Robinson, Executive Director of the Independent Schools Council (ISC), outlined the financial impact of the sector



Irfan Latif, Principal of DLD College in London; Lana Foster, Managing Director of Bright World; Kris Robbetts, Senior Associate, Veale Wasbrough Vizards LLP; and Yasemin Wigglesworth, Executive Officer of AEGIS (pictured L-R).

A number of guardianship issues were debated in a special session with a panel as pictured. Issues debated included whether the AEGIS stipulation of no more than three children at a host family was appropriate, with general agreement that only in exceptional circumstances should that ever be exceeded; and if schools providing their own guardianship service is a conflict of interest, which participants agreed it would be if school staff were required to host students.

In his opening address, Robin Fletcher, Chief Executive of BSA, highlighted long-term shifts in the boarding school sector, noting that 30 years ago international students filled around one in every six to seven beds at UK boarding schools, and now that ratio is around one in three. "Now the business is very different. There is virtually no boarding school that doesn't have international students," he said.

Looking ahead, he anticipated that there will be more mergers and acquisitions in the UK boarding school sector, with Chinese investment likely.

He also challenged UK boarding schools on fees, arguing that these have gone up by around 450% in the last 30 years, attributing the decline of domestic students to this trend. He added that equal pricing across all boarding facilities regardless of their quality did not meet with contemporary expectations.

Nicola Lutz, Director of StudyTravel Ltd, chaired a session on bringing agents, schools and guardianship organisations together, with delegates debating issues such as when agents should introduce the concept of guardianship to parents at the beginning of the process or after a school has been selected; should schools insist on a guardianship being in place before issuing a CAS [Certificate of Acceptance of Studies]; inviting guardianship organisations to participate in agent fam trips; and school communications with guardianship providers and agents.

Challenging delegates to come up with examples of best practice, Dr Helen Wright, Chair of AEGIS, said that international students are hugely important role models for other students in the UK. "Each of them is amazing; they have travelled; they are multilingual."

She urged that safeguarding should be put first, despite weakness in legislation. "That doesn't mean we shouldn't do it. International students are extremely vulnerable in terms of language, distance and culture." She added that the sector should appreciate multilingualism and respond to diverse, individual needs of students. "Schools and guardians are partners in all of this."

Giving an overview of future legislation requirements around sponsoring students, Nichola Carter, Partner of Carter Thomas Solicitors, advised delegates that independent secondary institutions will require a Tier 4 license to recruit any non-UK student, including EU, from 2021. She reminded schools that as the sponsor of students, they are ultimately responsible for that student, and could lose a sponsor license for negligence in safeguarding issues.

See StudyTravel Magazine's most recent **secondary focus article on UK guardianships**.

**Matthew Knott,**  
News Editor, StudyTravel  
[www.studytravel.network](http://www.studytravel.network)



Nicola Lutz leading a session on agents, schools and guardianship providers.

## Study UK boarding school campaign (North East Asia)



According to the UK Independent Schools Council 2018 census, there has been steady growth in pupil numbers from North East Asia. Hong Kong students alone constitute more than 17% of the total number of international students studying at British independent schools. This figure is expected to continue to be stable over the next few years.

As North East Asia is an important market for UK school sector, British Council is launching a promotion campaign to help UK boarding schools' marketing and student recruitment needs.

Through the marketing campaign, British Council will help UK boarding schools to:

1. Identify the most targeted audience
2. Communicate messaging that speaks to East Asia parents and students
3. Enhance your positioning, profile and attractiveness in North East Asia
4. Boost your international student recruitment numbers
5. Meet new agent partners

Benefits of participating:

- Raise your profile through digital and print media reaching a wide audience of prospective students and Influencers
- Engage directly with prospective students and influencers at face-to-face events
- Generate new links - these campaigns will target not only prospective students and their parents but also teachers and agents. Participating schools seeking new partnerships can take this opportunity to establish links with potential partners
- Grow and strengthen your agent network

To find out more information about what is included in the Study UK boarding school campaign in North East Asia please contact: **Anna Lee, Head of Education Services, North East Asia, British Council** [anna.lee@britishcouncil.org.hk](mailto:anna.lee@britishcouncil.org.hk) for details.

## What are our responsibilities as a 'guardianship agency'?



Some say we are simply responsible for ensuring that students have accommodation with reliable host families. However, from the moment a child first decides to study abroad, they begin a long journey that will shape the rest of their life. Should our responsibilities not reflect the importance of this 'journey'?

Kasia's mother first contacted Connexcel in March 2018 via the Aegis website. Kasia's mother was not familiar with the UK education system, so our first guardianship role was to offer honest advice based on Kasia's needs and prepare her for a transition into the UK education system. Based on the curriculum from her school of choice, Connexcel identified gaps in Kasia's knowledge that could aid her transition to the UK and provided relevant one-to-one tuition that covered a range of subjects from German to 'Life in the UK'.

During this time, Connexcel's guardianship team had handpicked a suitable host family for Kasia and arranged all logistics for her arrival. They also resolved any problems, such as complex residency permit issues, and cared for Kasia's emotional well-being, meaning that Kasia's family knew their daughter, who was on the other side of the world, had people she could rely on.

Kasia has been very successful at school; she won last year's concerto competition and is now looking at options in UK higher education. Kasia's mum owes her daughter's 'personal growth' to the 'unending care, attention and help provided by Connexcel'. If our responsibilities had ended at simply providing a host family, Kasia's time in the UK would have been very different and might not have even happened because of complications with her residency permit. We firmly believe that, although a host family acts as a child's physical 'Guardian', behind every child there should be a team of guardians that offer support all the way along a child's educational journey.

**John Zhang,**  
Managing Director, Connexcel

# How to make the value of Guardianship more transparent to international parents?

There is currently no legal requirement for an international pupil to have a formal guardian appointed whilst studying in the UK. The selected school is the Tier 4 Visa sponsor and is therefore ultimately legally responsible for the child's wellbeing whilst he/she is in the UK.

However, no one really argues that guardianship, when performed well, is of huge value to young international students. The challenge is what a guardianship service should include, and at what cost to better 'make the case' for international parents to appoint a guardian.

An initial challenge seems to be that the merits of Guardianship are introduced too late in the pupil recruitment process and therefore don't get included in the financial planning process families go through before deciding on a UK education. As Yasemin Wigglesworth, Executive Officer of AEGIS says, "Education and guardianship should be considered simultaneously."

One reason perhaps that guardianship is introduced so late into the process is that some agents, without their own guardianship services to sell, do not want to put off parents by raising the issue of additional costs that guardianship involves. Also, sometimes parents are unaware until very late in the recruitment process of additional times when schools close, like exeat weekends, and are therefore not immediately aware of the need to have a guardian during these times, if nothing else.

However the role of a good guardian is so much more than knowing the whereabouts of a child when the school is closed. As Caroline Nixon, General Secretary, British Association of Independent Schools with International Students (BAISIS) points out; "It is so important that there is someone there for the child who is independent of the school. Additionally, it is hard to see how a school can comply with Visa requirements to be aware of the student's whereabouts in the UK at all times unless there is a good guardian and it is astonishing that guardians are not presently required to conform to any regulations."

So how can accredited, highly respected guardianship companies present their services in a more compelling way?

AEGIS accreditation is one way to establish 'quality credentials' in the market. AEGIS is a registered charity and offers an accrediting and inspection service for guardians and therefore there is peace of mind that AEGIS 'approved' guardianship organisations will offer high quality care.

Julia Evans, Director of Cambridge Guardian Angels said "Proactive guardianship can enhance the pastoral and complement the academic experience of international students coming to schools in the UK, while AEGIS accreditation gives parents and schools confidence that the care will be of the highest quality and value."

Also, quality guardianship organisations can perhaps help themselves more by offering a transparent inclusive fee structure to parents. Understandably, guardianship organisations sometimes feel uncomfortable publishing their fees, as it is clearly very hard to calculate exactly what each child will require, depending on the specific health, behavioural, academic and travel challenges they might face during their time in the UK. However, it is difficult to imagine that this lack of transparency is helping good guardians dispel the myth that their services are too expensive, if they are unwilling to provide upfront costs?

Schools also need to support quality guardianship organisations. Often they do not insist that a child has a formal guardianship arrangement in place at the time of recruitment. Sometimes schools just require a box to be ticked on an application form to say there is a guardian in place and to provide a name and address of the 'responsible' adult. However, too often this information isn't verified or checked adequately until a problem occurs...

Therefore the challenge is significant, but has to start with schools and quality agents promoting accredited guardianship services at the start of their relationships with every family. Also, best practice must be supported by guardianship regulations and legislative clarification that a formal guardianship is set up for each international student before they arrive in the UK.

**Pat Moores**  
**UK Education Guide**

## Cheltenham Ladies' College – European Girls' Maths Olympiad

An international boarder is hoping to be selected for the International Maths Olympiad team following her excellent performance at the 2018 European Girls' Maths Olympiad (EGMO).

Alevtina, from Russia, secured a silver medal for her individual performance at the competition, as well as helping the UK team come second out of 36 official European teams and third overall.

EGMO is a prestigious international maths competition aimed at girls in Year 11 and above. It aims to encourage as many girls as possible to get involved in mathematical problem solving and to raise the proportion of female students taking part in the International Mathematical Olympiad.

**Katie Haigh, PR and Digital Communications Manager,  
Cheltenham Ladies' College**



## The Leys, Cambridge - Jack Jiang wins international trophy design competition

Jack Jiang, a Year 11 pupil at The Leys, Cambridge, has won an international competition to design the trophy for the £1million Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering.

The trophy, made to his design, will be presented later this year to Dr Bradford Parkinson, Professor James Spilker, Hugo Freuhauf and Richard Schwartz for their work creating the first truly global, satellite-based positioning system – GPS. Jack will receive a 3-D replica of his trophy design and a high-end laptop. He has also been invited to see the trophy being presented to the prize winners in a ceremony at Buckingham Palace.

Jack's design was selected from more than 50 international entries to the competition, which was open to young people aged 14-24.

Ian Blatchford, Director of the Science Museum Group and chairman of the judging panel, said: "We chose Jack's design for its sheer exuberance – it will require a great amount of concentration and imagination to make. That quality appeals to the judges, and we will work closely with Jack to realise the final trophy."

Jack, from Hong Kong, is studying Chemistry, Physics, Biology, English, Maths, and Art. He is interested in architectural engineering and believes that engineers are key to solving the world's future challenges: "There are countless environmental problems around the world, and right now they are only getting worse. However, I know that it will be engineers that provide solutions to them," he said.

**Naomi Needs, Media Officer, The Leys School, Cambridge**



## Taunton School International - Sayaka Hata from Japan

16-year-old Sayaka joined Taunton International Middle School (TSIMS) when she was 15 years old for the summer term. She decided to continue on to Taunton School International (TSI) as she was rewarded with some excellent exam results at TSIMS and had made many friends.

Sayaka enjoys learning new topics, with Economics as one of her favourite subjects. She is an exceptionally talented mathematician; she was the top achiever for the Intermediate Maths Challenge across the entire school. Sayaka would like a career in Mechanical Engineering and plans to utilise her maths skills to get a university place in that field.

She is a keen reader, and particularly likes mysteries and thrillers. To improve her English, Sayaka often reads books in Japanese and then reads them in English.

Although initially shy, Sayaka has formed a strong friendship group. She enjoys the meals at Taunton School and says that the pork spare ribs are her favourite. Sayaka added: "I love animals and I miss my dog at home. He is called Toto and my Grandma sends me pictures of him so that I can keep in touch!"

**Helen Bulbeck, Marketing and Communications Assistant, Taunton School**





## AEGIS MEMBER GUARDIANSHIP ORGANISATION NEWS

### Guardians UK

I'm sitting in my office at the end of half term reflecting on the beautiful weather outside and how as usual half term has had its ups and downs. There are always those who can't find their taxis, or knock on the wrong door when they arrive at the host family address and ring frantically to say there is no-one at home. Of course there is if they go to the right house! The calls from host families to say that our student has gone off without telling her, leaving the front door open, windows open and the bathroom flooded. I am sure we have all had many calls like this before. The holidays are the busiest time when our students are away from their schools and as guardians our responsibilities are even more key without the support of school and house parents.



Positive comments help – I've been called "a legend" this week and "a superstar". Things like this that make our jobs easier and make us smile and realise that there are so many positive things about what we do and that much of what we do is appreciated – although sometimes it really doesn't feel like it!

**Alison Warne,**  
**Guardianship Manager, Guardians UK**

The number one aim of AEGIS is to safeguard children and to promote best practice across the guardianship sector.

## White House Guardianship - Mental health awareness

All our local guardians and head office staff had a superb training session on Mental Health Awareness tailored to guardians, delivered by Dorset Mind. It was excellent and gave good insight into first response and assisting students who have challenges that impact their mental health.

Towards the end of the training, I had to accompany a student from Hong Kong to Heathrow airport so she could fly back home under escort with our Chinese Liaison Officer. Unfortunately she had been suffering with mental health problems and it was determined by both her school and us that the best place for her was back at home with her parents. As guardians, we try our utmost to support students throughout their education here but in this case, neither we nor the school could offer the appropriate level of support to her.

It is important to mentally prepare students for the challenges of studying away from home, whether for short or long periods of time.

**Will Hume, Marketing Director,  
White House Guardianships**



# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT CREATIVE WORK

## UKGuardianship



Spencer Lan is from Taiwan and is studying at d'Overbroecks School. At just 16 years old, he is already starting to pursue a career in architecture. He is hoping to go to Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL.



Queenie Hong is 18 years old and from Hong Kong, and is studying at Rossall School. She has been offered a place at UAL (University of the Arts London) for next year.



## Leighton Park School



Aidana, age 18 from Kazakhstan



Baichuan, age 15 from China



Blaire, age 18 from China

## Short story: Miracle by Nikki Put, Year 10, Clifton College

It was supposed to be a normal, tranquil evening, until this random kid appeared in front of my doorstep and claimed to be my daughter.

I was sitting in the lounge, reading a self-help book called *How to Move On* and petting my dog Rex's fluffy head before hearing the faint chime of the doorbell. "Wait, I'm coming" I said, annoyed that I had to get up from my cosy seat. The doorbell chimed again. "I'm coming, be patient." I said once again through gritted teeth, it better not be one of those crazy kids. The doorbell sounded again, this time like a chicken getting hit repeatedly onto a gong. "I'M HERE" I yelled, "What in the world are you doing-" Upon opening the door, I found out that a little girl in rags was staring back at me, her eyes like a faun's. She lifted a tiny, bony finger and pointed right at me, her mouth formed the most absurd words I've ever heard, "Papa."

I was in disbelief, there was no way that she was my daughter because I wasn't married anymore and I've never had a child who is a girl. "No, I'm not your papa, you are mistaken kiddo, so bye." I gave her a forced smile and tried to close the door, but I couldn't because she pressed her whole body against it and gripped the handle. She collected herself, took a deep breath and said clearly, "No, you are my papa, I am sure of it, let me in please."

I was about to protest, when Rex suddenly jumped onto her with full force. I gasped as I watched her fall backwards onto the floor. To my surprise, Rex was happily licking her face, which was out of the ordinary, since he has never been excited around others since the accident. "My puppy!". She pointed at Rex with a bright smile on her face.

That was enough, I was not about to have this girl claiming my property. "Can you just tell me where you live so I can take you back? What's your mom's name?" Looking up at me, her eyes glimmering, a name rolled off her tongue with ease, "Heather Watson."

The world seemed to stop for a split second, my mind blanked, then terror slowly seeped in. I felt my jaw drop, and my feet backing away, "How-how did you know my late wife's name?". She tilted her head, seemingly confused, but a reply came naturally, "She is my momma, and you are my papa, James Cross."

I blinked blankly, breaking into a cold sweat. Nothing could explain this, unless if I was dreaming, but it was a fact that I wasn't. "Sorry, I'm-I-I need to take a breather." I stumbled back into the lounge, plopping myself down. Head in my hands, I tried to let the whole situation sink in: This kid knows my name and mentioned my late wife. "Where is momma? And Jax?" I jumped in my seat, the girl had let herself in without a sound.

I felt a sudden wave of nausea, my eyes wobbling, my lips trembling, the room was closing in- I was going to faint again. My arm slipped, causing me to almost fall to the floor. The girl caught my arm, lifting it up with all the strength in her little body. "Papa, are you... alright?". I dizzily looked up at her, seeing her concern-filled face. With a closer look, I started noticing familiar features: My strong brows and dark hair, Heather's full lips and button nose... I snapped away, trying to oppress the dreaded memory, but I owed the girl an explanation.

I took a deep breath and let out a long sigh, signalling her to sit on the armchair next to mine. She pouted and crawled onto the chair, Rex right beside her.

Once she settled down, I told her about the accident three years ago. How I lost control of the steering wheel, how we slammed into the brick wall, my final look at my wife and son as they curled up at the back of the car, the life draining out of them... Her face twisted from shock to horror, tears flooded her eyes, "I'm so sorry papa, I didn't know... they were--I'm so sorry."

As I cuddled her in my arms and as Rex cluelessly howled, I relived the moment in regret, knowing how she was going to deliver a baby girl... Wait... there is no way... it can't be possible. I looked at the girl in my arms: her frail body, our similar features, the same energy that Jaxon had... It was as if she was my unborn daughter.

I couldn't fathom it, it would be impossible, but even if she wasn't, she was the piece I've needed for a very long time. Filled with an unknown yet familiar warmth, I wiped her tears, held her up and declared, "You're right, you're my daughter after all, and I will love you for the rest of my life." "Really? You're going to be my papa?". I nodded solemnly, and found myself getting tackled by my new daughter, laughing with a smile bright enough to fill the room.

Later on, I realised that she became my daughter on Easter day, which is the same day Christ has risen from the tomb. It was such an odd coincidence, and I'm slightly afraid that this was all planned out. No matter what, she is still my purpose, my hope and my little miracle.



## News

- We are very pleased to welcome the following schools who have all recently joined AEGIS: **Kings School**, Canterbury; **The King's Hospital School**, Dublin; **Kingswood School**, Bath; **Kimbolton School**, Huntingdon; **St Mary's School**, Cambridge; **Jersey College for Girls**; **Woodhouse Grove School**, West Yorkshire; and **Wrekin College**, Shropshire.
- Congratulations to **Academic Guardians**, **Cambridge Guardians Angels**, **James-Lee Consultancy** and **Students International Ltd** who all successfully gained AEGIS re-accreditation. We are pleased to welcome a new guardianship organisation **London International Agency** who recently gained full AEGIS accreditation.
- Please check the AEGIS website regularly for the most up-to-date list of AEGIS accredited guardianship organisations: **click here**
- In February and April, we held two pre-inspection workshops in London, which were both a great success and well attended. The aim of these workshops was to guide new guardianship organisations through the AEGIS accreditation process. Feedback from both workshops was positive. Should you be interested in attending such a workshop in the future, please contact **sharon@aegisuk.net**.
- We are running a training day with Julie Wilkinson from **Brave the Rage** – an Anti-Bullying and Anger Management Training provider - for children, young people, students, parents and professionals. The workshop entitled 'The 5 Steps: Solutions to Personal Wellbeing' will be held on **Wednesday 29th May 2019 in London**. If you would like to express an early interest, please contact **elaine@aegisuk.net**.
- Dr Helen Wright and Yasemin will both be taking part in the World Leading Schools Association conference in Prague in July **www.wlsafoundation.org**. Helen will be speaking about some of the innovative and forward-looking practices currently employed by schools across the world to empower and develop their faculty staff and Yasemin will be taking part in a panel discussion on how best to support international students.

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## Opinion Disclaimer

The views, thoughts and opinions expressed by our contributors and authors to this AEGIS newsletter solely belong to the contributors and authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of AEGIS.

Thank you to all our member Schools and Guardianship Organisations for your continued support.

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