



Welcome!

We are extremely lucky to have such dedicated and experienced people involved in AEGIS. Last month, AEGIS welcomed new Advisory Committee member Linde Melhuish, Education and Leadership Consultant.

I've now attended my first committee meeting in London and I have been impressed by the care and commitment shown to our international students, and the support for the associated guardianship organisations and schools.

We are certainly living in challenging times: one aspect immediately strikes me. There are growing numbers of international day students joining our schools, both in the independent and maintained sectors: from traditional schools, to Sixth Form Colleges and Further Education establishments. We should rightly be concerned about the quality of care for these students when seeking suitable host families or accommodation. The more we can do to publicise the work of AEGIS, the more we can hope to safeguard these students and to enable them to have a quality experience in the UK.

Member schools would certainly be best advised to have a policy in place to ensure that for international day students, pastoral care outside school hours is covered, so needed when day pupils' contact with the school is more limited. Some may even be accommodated in hostels without adequate supervision. AEGIS is reviewing the inspection framework for Guardianship Organisations with international day students.

Linde Melhuish

Education and Leadership Consultant



Philippine School Project
We are urgently appealing for ANY text books in English, Mathematics, Biology, Physics and Chemistry.
For further information please contact Alison Blythe Studentsint@aol.com.

It's all about the Exchange of Cultures

Guardianship Organisations rely on quality home stay accommodation for international students. The role of host family comes with huge responsibilities. So what are the rewards?

For Margaret and Stephen based in Scarborough, it's all about the exchange of cultures. For approximately 8 years the couple have enjoyed sharing their home with Chinese students who taught them to cook authentic Chinese food in exchange for them teaching the students to cook English food.

It's this exchange of culture that also makes the experience particularly rewarding for Terry and Eileen from Bradford. Now in their second year of hosting, Terry commented how 'during that time we have learnt a lot about China and Chinese culture and have found the experience very interesting and enjoyable'.

For many, such as Joy Wilton, 'being a host family became a way of life'. Joy still receives letters thanking her for being a second family to them.

Host family experiences supplied by Ailie Fan

Mark Taylor, Executive Director of The Taylor Partnership, recently joined the Trustees. Having established the immigration law firm in 2008, Mark's firm is now recognised as one of the leading authorities on Tier 4.



Tier 4: The Winds of Change

With the UK General Election on the horizon, the question of immigration is increasingly at the fore. Whatever the result in May 2015, one thing is for certain: the rules currently governing immigration will change.

Indeed, for those involved in Tier 4 we have already been offered an amuse bouche. UKVI announced a significant change to the rules regarding Highly Trusted Status. As of 1st November, the "refusal rate" (the number of permissible refused visa applications per HTS institution has been reduced from 20% to 10%). The impact of this will permeate through the industry – from schools (attempting to manage compliance), to agents and guardians (struggling to assist the students).

For those of us that have been in this business for a few years, the days of simply having to issue visa invitation letters seem so long ago. However, it was right that the rules were changed. There was a great deal of abuse of the system and fraud – largely instigated by unscrupulous owners of private colleges. Some "students" were coming to the UK to work and the owners of the colleges did not care. After all, they had been paid.

The introduction of the Points Based System turned anyone working in the field of Tier 4 into a de facto immigration officer. Without the CAS, the student could not seek to enter the UK and this unique 14 digit number links the school to the student and UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). One can see the Home Office logic in expecting those institutions that have chosen to be a Tier 4 sponsor, and financially benefit from international students, to be fluent in the immigration rules and procedures. Compliance is not something that is alien to schools. ISI, Ofsted, Child Protection, Health and Safety – take your pick. Whatever the issue, a school has to comply. Visas and Tier 4 are no different and good, resourced administration – as in all the other areas of inspection – will lead to compliance.

However, the Home Office – not satisfied with effectively creating a team of front line immigration officers (employed by the schools) – have gone a step further.

Not only do Registrars and Admissions staff have to be conversant in the immigration rules, they have to be statisticians – keeping an eye on refusal, enrolment and retention rates. Will this make students less likely to want to come to the UK? Will it make schools less likely to want to work in the international sector? Perhaps not on a large scale – but it doesn't help.

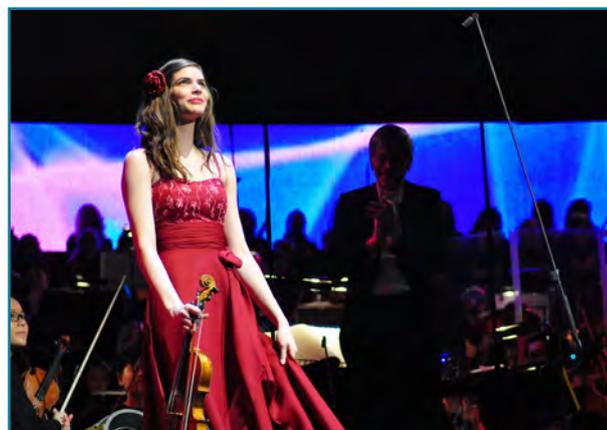
Some schools will fall foul, not as a result of malevolence or disregard for the immigration rules, but because they are victims of circumstances and events that are often out of their control.

By Mark Taylor,
Executive Director of The Taylor Partnership

International Student Success Story - Elisa Mitrofan, Wellington College

In 2011 Elisa Mitrofan joined Wellington College as our only pupil from Romania. Coming into the 5th form of any senior school can be difficult and there were some initial challenges. However, Elisa was determined to do well and engaged fully in College life with music as her special focus. She also joined our International Students' Committee and contributed to the College's International Magazine.

As an extraordinarily talented musician, Elisa performed at numerous concerts, the most notable playing the Carmen Fantasy violin solo accompanied by the Wellington College Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall.



Originally, Elisa's future was set to be in music but she developed such a love of English Literature that, having achieved the maximum score of 45 at IB, she is now reading English at Oxford.

By Ginette Vonchek

Sabrina the Maverick Student

Although only 13, Sabrina had always appeared indifferent to our guardian visits and not to need our help. Her parents seemed very laid back and on her first half term gave permission for her to stay with Cousin Benny in London. We spoke to Benny, also from Hong Kong, and he seemed a responsible person.

We still wanted to check Sabrina's travel arrangements for both journeys, however, and discovered that Benny was not intending on driving her back to the school on the Sunday evening, but instead, putting her on a train at Victoria on a winter's evening.

Had we not checked, Sabrina would have been travelling alone on trains for several hours. The local station is tiny and does not have a taxi rank. Sabrina would have had to call a taxi, or even worse, she may have decided to walk the 2 miles to school in the dark, alone – spine shivering stuff. We stopped this from happening. In the end Benny drove Sabrina back to school.

England is often seen to be a green, safe village by overseas parents. In Hong Kong, people tend to go out in the dark regularly and it seems safer. Taxis are readily available and students know their way around.

It is up to us, as guardians, to be a guide to Parents and their children in the UK, tell them when we are not happy with arrangements and do our utmost to keep them safe.

By Lana Foster

This sentiment is shared by all our Guardianship Organisations. Ben Hughes' Guardianship Area Manager, Mary Watford, described how she helped a student from Hong Kong settle into her new life on her first day in the UK; from taking her shopping for a duvet, pillow, hair dryer and toiletries to moving her into her room in the boarding house:

"She looked very settled and content to be at her new school and it was time for parents and guardians to leave at 7.30pm.

Upon returning home I emailed her family to reassure them that all was well. I also texted Fiona the next day to check on her first day at school and arranged to visit her in a couple of week's time."

Watch this space

For a detailed report on our 'Cultural Awareness & Communication' conferences at Sedbergh School on 25th November 2014 and Felsted School on 30th April 2015.



Sedbergh School

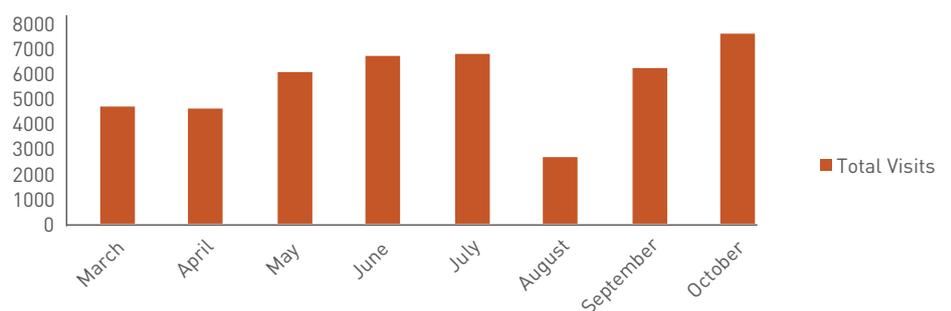


Felsted School

Website

The AEGIS website www.aegisuk.net receives on average 5645 visits per month from over 80 countries. If you are an AEGIS member and have not yet updated your profile page please email us for details: info@aegisuk.net We want to be able to provide overseas parents with as much information about our Guardianship Organisation and School members as possible.

Total visits per month 2014



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