

THE AEGIS STANDARD

A LOCKDOWN SPECIAL!

We hope you enjoy catching up on AEGIS news, the challenges COVID-19 has presented and the different lockdown perspectives from AEGIS member schools, guardians, international students and families. Thank you to all who contributed.

It's been an extremely busy time in the AEGIS office with the launch of the new Preliminary and Gold Standard Accreditation levels and a revision of the AEGIS Quality Standards. This has been with guardianship organisations of all sizes in mind, in order to ensure our processes are robust but inclusive. Our Head of Inspections, Jackie Scotney, has worked incredibly hard to produce a set of template policies for new guardianship organisations which have proved very popular and well received.

AEGIS has been taking part in webinars and podcasts, aimed at overseas parents and agents, highlighting the measures being put in place both by schools and AEGIS accredited guardianship organisations to support and safeguard returning international students. It has been a pleasure to work closely with both schools and guardians. We thank British Council for their support with the AEGIS organised webinars, in particular British Council Hong Kong.

AEGIS guardians have continued to work together, providing support to schools and to each other for example, in the planning of potential quarantine provision. The role of guardian has not stopped since children have returned home. Some students have remained in homestays in the UK over lockdown. Guardians have been providing support with online learning to those still here and overseas, moving belongings and helping with applications for those moving schools or going on to university.

We have many more initiatives planned for the future, all with the aim of improving the international student's experience and ensuring that they are well looked after.

Adam Lubbock - AEGIS Chair



AEGIS has issued a Covid-19 Safe Charter.

Guardianship organisations which have adopted the AEGIS Covid-19 Safe Charter confirm that they will comply with all government and PHE guidance and support the return of international students to the UK.

AEGIS Covid-19 Safe Charter

Look out for guardians displaying the logo!

AEGIS LAUNCHES NEW PRELIMINARY & GOLD STANDARD ACCREDITATION

As the leading experts in educational guardianship, AEGIS offers the highest standard of inspection and accreditation of UK guardianship organisations. We are pleased to offer two levels of accreditation – Preliminary and Gold Standard. Look out for the new logos being displayed by guardians. Our inspection process is rigorous, at both levels. This is necessary in order to ensure standards and safeguard children.

Jackie Scotney, Head of Inspection explains further, “The current situation is that there are many more unaccredited guardian organisations providing services to overseas students than there are accredited. Accreditation is important as it provides parents and students with greater peace of mind when selecting a suitable guardian.

“AEGIS accreditation has always been recognised as rigorous, with the welfare and safeguarding of students the main priority. This will always be the case. The introduction of two levels of accreditation will enable greater inclusivity across the sector, whilst maintaining the highest expectations of AEGIS members.”

Preliminary Accreditation

Preliminary Accreditation is open to all guardianship organisations or sole guardians of any size. Guardians can even apply before they recruit students. This level ensures that the essential standards are in place in order to provide safe guardianship.

Checks include ensuring that company documents such as handbooks, contracts and policies are in place and adequate, as well as proof of insurance and evidence of safer recruitment checks for all staff, homestays and volunteers. A full list of requirements is set out in the AEGIS Inspection Handbook and Guardianship Organisation Quality Standards.

Providing the evidence and documentation meet the essential standards, Preliminary Accreditation status will be awarded and remains valid for 2 years. It is hoped that guardians will go on to apply for the Gold Standard accreditation, however the option to reapply for Preliminary Accreditation after 2 years is open to them.

Gold Standard Accreditation

Gold Standard Accreditation is the most prestigious accolade that a guardianship organisation can hold and signifies the highest standards of safeguarding and care in the guardianship of international students.

Guardianship organisations who have had a minimum of 3 students under their care for two terms are able to apply for Gold Standard Accreditation. The inspection process is based on the AEGIS Quality Standards and a guardianship organisation has to meet all of the applicable standards in order to gain Gold Standard Accreditation. Inspections are carried out by independent, trained inspectors and include interviews with school staff, homestays and students. Re-inspection is due every 4 years as before.



All current AEGIS accredited guardianship organisations automatically become Gold and appear in the list of Gold Standard Accredited Guardianship Organisations.

It is hoped that our new levels of accreditation will make inspections more inclusive to guardianship organisations of all sizes and will promote the highest standards of care in guardianship and safeguarding of international students.

Find out more here or contact sharon@aegisuk.net **We are always happy to help!**



AEGIS WELCOMES ITS FIRST AFFILIATE MEMBER OF AEGIS, MINERVA TUITION

SMOOTHING THE TRANSITION - Preparing overseas pupils for a British education. How Minerva Tuition and their partners such as AEGIS can ease the transition.

There is absolutely no doubt that a UK boarding school experience presents its challenges but also wonderful opportunities. To take the words of one Minerva client;

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“Stretch out of your comfort zone and embrace the opportunities given to you. Life is what you make of it.”

Valerie Weston, whose son was educated at a UK boarding school while she and her family were in the Far East also adds;

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“A key factor in the transition process is also that of guardians. We always advise parents to appoint a professional guardian. Guardianship companies understand the unique demands that are involved when changing schools from abroad to the UK boarding school system and are an essential source of pastoral support. We also strongly advise parents to ensure any guardian is accredited by AEGIS. AEGIS ensures that all guardianship providers who are accredited by them meet the highest standard of care and professionalism. Parents know that having a guardian they can trust and rely on is crucial. This makes them feel more comfortable about the whole process.”

Minerva Tuition is a Hong Kong-based provider of quality tuition and schools' advice for families looking to send their children into the British independent education system.

Minerva Tuition has successfully prepared pupils for admission to many of the UK's leading independent schools – including Eton, Harrow, Winchester, Westminster, Wycombe Abbey and Sevenoaks. Once admission has been secured, Minerva can provide further assistance - working in partnership with both schools and entities such as AEGIS - to ensure that pupils are able to cope with the UK curriculum upon arrival at their new school.

Successfully transitioning from education in one country to another may bring life-long benefits but in this process pupils often require individual help along their educational and emotional journeys.

But it is not just about the academics. For overseas pupils there are often also considerable cultural adjustments to be made. To give an example: one of our English Literature tutors was guiding a Singapore-based pupil through a poem on a past paper for entry into one of the UK's most prestigious schools. The poem's major imagery comprised foxes and pheasants - both of which are fairly rare in downtown Singapore!

Ensuring that pupils are well placed to settle socially in their new school is also important. Parents in Singapore and Hong Kong are aware that they are a long way away from their sons and daughters. Unsurprisingly, they are often anxious that their children will settle easily. Key concerns are typically about the ease with which their children will make new friends, adapt to boarding, deal with possible homesickness and cope with unfamiliar surroundings. And of course, the British winter climate can be testing!

Ensuring that a child feels well-settled is even more important in these times of global uncertainty and 2020 has presented challenges for many families. We keep in close contact with many of the schools with whom we have worked in the past, and are thus able to regularly update parents where this is helpful. All parties are working hard towards resumption of normality as soon as is practicable – with the safety and welfare of pupils being the most important consideration.

Thus, Minerva Tuition and its associates like AEGIS work to provide such holistic advice, allaying parental and pupil concerns alike and ensuring that pupils and their parents are well-placed to make the transition as smooth as possible. **Visit the Minerva Tuition website: www.minervatuition.com**

Are you an educational consultant or agent working with overseas families? Would you be interested in affiliate membership of AEGIS in order to demonstrate your commitment to the safe guardianship and hosting of international students?

Contact [Yasemin yasemin@aeGISuk.net](mailto:yasemin@aeGISuk.net) for further details.



STUDY TRAVEL LAUNCHES NEW ONLINE CONFERENCES

ST Alphitos online

StudyTravel has launched a series of boutique online agent conferences, ST Alphitos Online, running from May 6th through to July 31st.

These online events enable educators and agents to forge new connections and keep in touch with existing contacts, particularly while travel restrictions are in place.

Each ST Alphito focuses either on a study destination (city, region or country) or a specific student market, and is held over a four-hour period, allowing participants to schedule up to eight 30-minute online meetings. Ash Rees, Manager of ST Alphe Conferences, explained, "Alphitos, or 'little Alphas', are half-day online events that embody everything industry professionals love about ST Alphe Conferences in an accessible online format to suit their circumstances."

As with regular ST Alphe Conferences, the events feature quality, reference-checked agents, structured meeting schedules and full support from the ST Alphe team.

The in-house Meeting Manager system has been optimised to facilitate online meetings seamlessly, with enhanced appointment scheduling, integration with Skype, and an electronic gong to signify the beginning and end of meetings.

The launch of ST Alphitos follows StudyTravel's highly successful **world-first online agent conferences** ST Alphe Istanbul and ST Alphe Secondary Focus – Online in April this year, which featured 67 agents from 28 countries.

The new **ST Alphitos** destination-focused events include two specific events for UK secondary schools: North of England (3rd June) and New Zealand (31st July).

The student market-focused events, are: Hong Kong (5th June); Japan (12th June); Korea (19th June); Africa (26th June); Italy (3rd July); Spain (10th July); China (16th July) and Colombia (24th July).

Click here for more details on ST Alphitos Online. For more information or to book, contact Ash Rees on ash@studytravel.network

Ash Rees Manager, ST Alphe Conferences
+44 (0) 20 7440 4036
www.studytravel.network



SUTHERLAND EDUCATION

Lockdown with a guardian family

So, it all started on 18th March when I scooped up Robin & Roy early from their respective schools, and together with one of my children, drove to our home in Scotland. We were loaded in with all our worldly possessions, 4 dogs, a tortoise and little more than room to breathe!

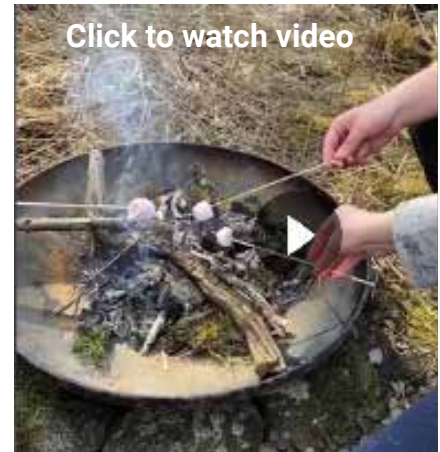
Eight weeks on and we are all doing OK! We have settled in to a daily routine of online school, our daily walk and an evening together of board games, TV or the Wii party which has been dusted off and become a firm favourite ... the kids laugh hysterically. Every Sunday is family zoom quiz night which everyone enjoys participating in and last week we ran the quiz, each leading a section, after Roy had pulled it all together on a fabulous interactive power point. This was particularly great for Roy's English and confidence.

It is fair to say we have all become completely obsessed with food - watching daily food programmes, reading recipe books, learning to cook, and then enjoying a good critique of every meal and deciding what meal is next! Both Robin and Roy have enjoyed learning general food preparation skills through to delivering a whole meal to table and although there have been a few mini disasters they will both leave lockdown proficient cooks enabling them to look after themselves through university and beyond.

We are blessed living here in the glen that the great outdoors remains largely open to us -the view of mountains which surrounds us and our daily walk, although shorter than once and restricted to lanes, not the usual hillsides. Still, we are managing 5 km daily and the once a week 10-13 km to keep ourselves active.

Roy is also enjoying a 3 km run every day with my son and is rising wonderfully to the challenge of improving his fitness during lockdown.

Wioletta Laszyn, Student Welfare, Sutherland Education



Click to watch video

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“With our thoughts of others in such worse situations right now, I know this has been a journey and it will continue to be a journey for the foreseeable future, but it's been such a positive learning journey and one that I hope they will look back on and hold quite fondly.”

**Helen Pickering, Guardian,
Sutherland Education**



SUTHERLAND EDUCATION

AEGIS MEMBER GUARDIANSHIP ORGANISATION LOCKDOWN NEWS

STUDY LINKS

Appreciation from Study Links students

As we continue to support students from all corners of the world, we can see how this pandemic is truly having a devastating global impact. We are fortunate that our students and their families are safe and well, especially those who battled with COVID-19. It gives us real confidence for the future that our students, the next generation of thinkers and leaders, are remaining so resilient and positive throughout these unprecedented times.

Many of our students and parents have been in touch expressing their thanks for support they've received and sharing their experiences during COVID-19. Here are a few of their stories, from them to you.

Zoë Pilling, Guardianship Lead, Study Links International Ltd.



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"Hello everyone, Dante returned to Hong Kong from the UK and on arrival tested positive for COVID-19. He was isolated and observed in the hospital. It's already been 4 weeks since he's been home after his final test was negative. He now has no symptoms and is in good health. During his 5 week stay in hospital, our guardian often gave him information, greetings and comforted him, gave him positive energy, and encouraged him to participate in the school's online learning. We are very good with our family now, thank you very much!" Dante's Mum



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"During the epidemic period, I was given a lot of help from my guardian. The arrangement of going to the host family, food, accommodation, etc. was well arranged! After arriving in China, Study Links have been in touch about how I'm doing, and helping me how to study online, etc. thank you!"

Tina (pupil at Queen Margaret's School)

AEGIS MEMBER GUARDIANSHIP ORGANISATION LOCKDOWN NEWS

REGENT GUARDIANS

Amazing Ariel Andhyka

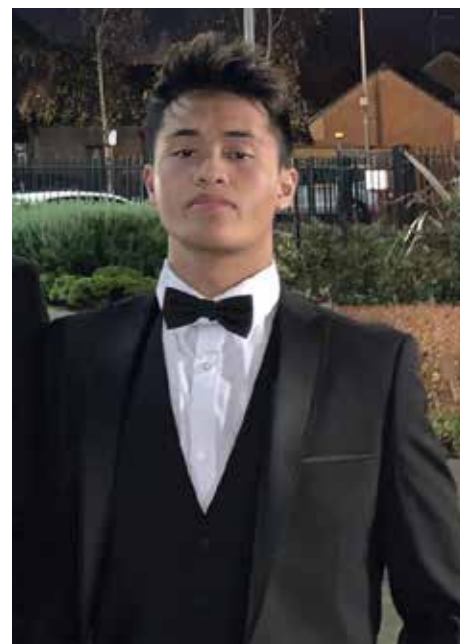
Ariel Andhyka, a Regent Guardians student from Indonesia, is currently midway through his A Level course at Cardiff Sixth Form College. Like most international boarding students, he returned home very suddenly at the start of the COVID-19 epidemic in the UK. Since then he has continued studying his A Levels via virtual live lessons streamed daily from the College.

Ariel's aim is to study Computing at a top UK university when he completes his A Levels next year and, encouraged by the College to pursue other academic interests alongside his A Levels during the lockdown, he put his mind to investigating and developing a research project to further his interest and skills in IT.

His inspiration came from creating complex algorithms to optimise image dataset. He reached out to a tutor and PhD student at Imperial College London and they directed him to the field of image processing within machine learning. The end goal is to enable computers to view images in the same way, or even better, than humans do.

He continues, "Image processing will help tremendously in diagnosing breast cancer. Breast cancer cases are still widely misdiagnosed, sometimes analysts can't tell whether or not the breast cancer is malignant or benign based on the image. If the result of my research goes well, I can help automate thousands of medical images to help 'de-noise' them and enable the model to classify images according to whether the tumour is malignant or benign."

Good luck to Ariel and Regent Guardians is proud that he's chosen to rise to the challenge from Cardiff Sixth Form College during these worldwide restrictions!



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"I'm trying to create a hybrid neural network that classifies the different types of 'noises' present in an image and also generates new images without noises.

Noises are distortions that sometimes appear in images due to light exposure or the camera itself."

Ariel Andhyka

UK STUDY CENTRE

Staying close whilst keeping a distance

Reliable guardians are known for thinking outside the box and supporting children with absolutely anything they need. They are bonded with their students in a different way to their parents, or schools – they are always on the children’s side, even when no one else is there, or when there is a conflict. After we helped all our students leave the UK in March to be with their families, we have no one physically remaining in schools. Despite this, the pandemic has given us a brilliant chance to prove that we are still needed. We continue working hard and would never say to our parents: “Sorry, this is not a guardianship-related question.”

Here are just a few examples of the wide range of logistical, financial, academic and wellbeing questions we have dealt with over the past few weeks:

- Negotiating a reduction of the summer term bill with the school, based on the change in parents’ personal circumstances and from information regarding savings from others partner schools
- Finalising the choice of subjects for the next year, where the school and student had completely different information, due to lack of tutor time
- Shipping things left behind and making sure clothes in the rooms are cleaned and ready for their arrival
- Arranging online tuition with external tutors for a child who was cut out from the school online learning system due to technical difficulties, and generally monitoring online learning to avoid missed lessons or lack of understanding
- Supporting a student who was struggling with her emotions after splitting up with her boyfriend during the lockdown
- Helping final year students to make decisions on their firm and insurance
- UCAS choices, with no options to visit universities in person
- Encouraging a shy student to take part in the school’s talent show to maintain the social aspect of their education
- Arranging Skype viewings of the new accommodation for a foundation student
- Discussing quarantine and contingency plans to prepare for September arrival, and reassuring parents again and again that UK is still a safe and good choice for their child’s education



UK STUDY CENTRE
Guardianship

Marianna Slivnitskaya, Head of Guardianship, UK Study Centre Guardianship

AEGIS MEMBER GUARDIANSHIP ORGANISATION LOCKDOWN NEWS

ACADEMIC GUARDIANS

Mission Impossible – Or was it...?

Academic Guardians UK Ltd, listen closely! Your mission - should you choose to accept it is to source, purchase and coordinate the drop-off of disposable gloves, masks and protective overalls for three students at three different schools, travelling together on an emergency flight back to China in the next 36 hours...

Whilst this 'mission' may sound easy, the COVID-19 pandemic had caused a severe shortage in Personal Protective Equipment – it was almost entirely depleted for fast online purchase and delivery. So, with limited time and a need for logistical co-ordination, this would prove to be quite the challenge. Step up 'Sylvia Baulch' - AGUK student account manager extraordinaire.

Sylvia's first point of call was to email and text all our drivers and local co-ordinators and ask for their help as the office team had scoured the internet in search of overalls, masks and disposable gloves, only to find them either out of stock or unable to be delivered in time.

Rick, our London airport driver searched both Heathrow & Gatwick and was unable to locate any of the kit needed. However, he did notice members of the general public dressed in overalls and branded protective equipment. He reported his findings back to the team and after researching the brand online, a store in East Sussex was identified and located. Miraculously, they had all the items required online and in the right sizes too.

With further planning by Sylvia, the students were successfully given their masks, gloves and overalls prior to check-in, enabling them to safely board the plane wearing their PPE. An all-round huge sigh of relief for the students, their families and the team at Academic Guardians UK. Mission accomplished!

Dawn Kettle, Operations Director, Academic Guardians UK Ltd



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An all-round huge sigh of relief for the students, their families and the team at Academic Guardians UK.

AEGIS MEMBER GUARDIANSHIP ORGANISATION LOCKDOWN NEWS

BOSSS GUARDIANS UK LTD

Due to unprecedented circumstances, the UK was in lockdown from 23rd March 2020, causing chaos to many international students wanting to travel home, as travel restrictions around the world changed and flights were being cancelled at late notice.

We maintained in constant communication with all students, parents and schools, informing and updating all arrangements and finding suitable homestays for those who could not travel home at the time - but with very little knowledge of how long these students would have to stay in the UK!

Natalia Jiang, a Year 11 student who had planned to stay in her present homestay for 2 to 3 weeks, has now stayed over 2 months already. "My homestay is very welcoming and they are really warm hearted. They got me settled into the family environment straight away," said Natalia who has missed seeing her friends. "As I have been in boarding school all my life, I do miss the general school environment and being able to see everyone around."

Natalia has been able to access all the online learning, including her piano lessons, as her homestay parents made sure she has priority over the home internet and the upright piano during lessons time.



When asked if she had encountered any problems during lockdown, Natalie replied, "I had trouble booking my flight back home and my guardian helped me book it at the end. I'm happy to be going back home, but at the same time I am sad, as I've finished my GCSEs now but won't be able to say a proper 'Goodbye' to all my school friends. We were hoping to hold a 'Prom' before I go back to China, but this won't happen now!"

The BOSSS Guardian Team



GUARDIANS INTERNATIONAL

Maintaining Morale

Keeping in touch and maintaining a high level of support for our families and students we consider to be imperative throughout this unprecedented time.

We immediately rolled out our “Maintaining Morale” campaign to all of our families and have not only shared access to academic support as far as providing resources and links to online tutoring, but also provided links to subjects of interest; TED Education, BBC Bitesize , Brain teasers, Links to live musical theatre , live astronomy & Kruger National Park game drives, to name just a few, all very much appreciated in feedback from our families.

Via our social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram) we run a theme of the week, for example #viewfrommywalk #learnsomethingnew #homebaking, posting a photo of what we have done in relation to this theme. This all supports and enhances the close relationship and strong communication channels between our families and their Guardians International Coordinator. It makes us so happy to receive lovely video messages, home-baking , walks as well as other photos of how our students are spending their time .

Our role has changed at this time and our approach and level of service and engagement has been very well received, our parents know that we are there and continue to support, educate and provide up to date information so that they can return back to the UK safely and prepared whenever that time may be.

**Paula Sherry, Operations Director,
Guardians International**



WHITE HOUSE GUARDIANSHIPS

Students' thoughts through lockdown

Lara and Margaux are 14 year old twins from Spain, they live 20 miles apart at their respective host families and both attend local comprehensive schools

Lara

I was the one who decided to go to the UK for a year because I wanted to take a break from my life in Spain because I wasn't really happy, and that way I could have a new life with a fresh start for a while, and my parents also thought it was a good way of improving my English. When lockdown began, I thought that I was just wasting my exchange year because I couldn't do most of the things I came here to do. Then I got used to it and realised that I was really lucky to be here and not in Spain, because at least here, I can go out, exercise and there's a garden. In Spain I would have been really bored. It hasn't been difficult, because I get to spend a lot more time with my host family, and do a lot of fun things and I really enjoy that. Here we are taking some daily exercise together.

Margaux

I wanted to stay here when lockdown began because I knew that the situation in Spain was much worse. I also love my life here so I would really like to stay as long as I can. My parents also agree with me as they think it's the best for me.

For me, living in lockdown hasn't been very difficult as I know how to keep myself busy with different activities that I enjoy, like drawing and painting, playing the guitar, reading and running, plus my host mum has presented me a lot of activities for me to do in case I'm bored.



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"It's true though that the beginning wasn't very easy and I felt very sad that school was over as I wasn't expecting it at all and I was just starting to make friends and to go out with them. I still sometimes feel sad but I know it's normal and my sister and my parents are always there to support me. Living with Clare and Kevin during lockdown has been very good and I feel very lucky to have them as my parents. Here is the Easter cake that I made and the eggs that I painted whilst in lockdown."

AEGIS MEMBER GUARDIANSHIP ORGANISATION LOCKDOWN NEWS

UK GUARDIANS

Our panic-free pandemic - how UK Guardians kept their cool

Kirk is from Vietnam and has been with UK Guardians since 2018 at a day school staying with a host family in Milton Keynes. When the lockdown began, the Milton Keynes host family was uncomfortable keeping Kirk due to them being key workers. We swooped in and collected Kirk the very same day and arranged a host family in sleepy Dorset that was comfortable to have Kirk at such short notice. Kirk remained with the Dorset host family for 10 weeks, keeping in regular contact with us. He then was able to board a rescue flight back to Vietnam in June 2020.

Sadly, not every international student had the same support from the beginning. We were frantically contacted by children at two different schools back in March 2020. Unfortunately, there are many more who 'slip through the net' and are not given the support they deserve from their 'guardian' based in the UK. They required emergency support as their boarding house was closing and they did not have an AEGIS accredited guardian to help them. We jumped straight in the car and picked them up while the rest of the team called all of our lovely Dorset host families to see who was available to host the students. By the end of the day, the students were settled and happy in their new host family accommodation.



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We are fully ready to support our students from September for the 'new normal'. We hope to see you soon!



AEGIS MEMBER SCHOOLS LOCKDOWN NEWS

STAMFORD ENDOWED SCHOOLS

Sonia Cheung

One may find attending school in a foreign country alone exciting yet daunting, especially having never been to the country before. That was what I felt at first when I left Hong Kong in September of 2015 to attend The Stamford Endowed Schools.

Though being in an unaccustomed environment, I did not find settling in a hard task. The boarding community has worked wonders – the staff all do their best to make sure everyone fits in and are comfortable with who they are living with. The boarders are all very respectful and accepting of each other. A diverse cultural background in the boarding community allows boarders to learn and appreciate each other's homes, festivals and practices.

Stamford offers countless opportunities for their students. There are more well-known ones like school choirs, sports teams and drama productions where I have been able to become close friends with schoolmates of different year groups. There are also opportunities that I have not come across, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Combined Cadet Forces (CCF). I have learnt a great amount throughout my 4 years of joining the Royal Navy section in the CCF – First Aid, Watersports, Drill & Discipline are just a few.

I have had the honour of being the Deputy Head Girl of the School. Ever since joining the school, my relationships with my peers and teachers bloomed and flourished. By being in this position, I was able to see how the encouraging and supportive environment was provided.

My experiences at Stamford have been life changing. Not only were they valuable, they have also shaped me into my confident and motivated self. Stamford was not just a school to me; it was also a second home – and I am proud to call myself an Old Stamfordian.



AEGIS MEMBER SCHOOLS LOCKDOWN NEWS



REDDAM HOUSE SCHOOL

Reddam House School has quickly and effectively adapted to the requirements set due to COVID-19. The digitalized environment not only embraces online learning, where the teacher staff is able to teach and communicate with the students, but more importantly, the Reddam House students and teachers are still strongly encouraged to take part in the numerous activities that make Reddam House a close community.

This range of activities expands from weekly sport challenges, for all ages, to our dynamic Mental Health & Wellbeing team, which consists of tips regarding the health of our eyes, mindfulness exercises, as well as sharing articles on these topics and more. Some of our peers were delighted to share their cooking and photography skills in our weekly contests, set by students themselves.

When it comes to virtual learning, teachers manage to effectively deliver the lessons, as well as support us in taking part to various activities that help us unwind away from school. For instance, we gladly take part to the Kahoot games and we had the opportunity to present our pets to each other.

All in all, Reddam House promotes dynamic engagement within the community, whilst they meet the requirements and overcome the barrier of social isolation set by this pandemic.



REDDAM
— HOUSE —
BERKSHIRE



AEGIS MEMBER SCHOOLS LOCKDOWN NEWS

QUEEN ETHELBURGAS

The unsung heroes of the COVID-19 crisis are our children. Unable to see friends, unable to follow their normal routine, unable to study in their schools, they have risen to their new challenges.

However, in our boarding schools there are international students who have the added challenge of being away from their home during lockdown - children that are now entering their tenth week of living in a 'home from home', staying in their boarding schools without the security of their families around them.

Boarding professionals all over the UK have dedicated themselves to the care of these children and the children of key workers; they have worked tirelessly to make the COVID-19 experience something positive. Here at Queen Ethelburga's, it has been an effort that is nothing short of remarkable, and the benefit to the students, even at a time of world crisis, is evident.

An example of this is Coco. Coco arrived to study with us in September of this academic year, and less than six months later she found herself unable to get a flight home. Initially shy, as she was without her friends, but Coco soon made the Coronavirus lockdown her very own learning opportunity.

Linguistically Coco flourished. Through the new environment of different year groups learning side by side via online portals, Coco was able to practise her English socially and academically, as she mentored the younger students with their work. She was challenged to discuss new topics with the staff and became more conversationally confident.

Culturally Coco experienced the best of British from within the walls of our campus. Through a more diverse activity programme, she experienced a true British childhood, from Maypole Dancing to campfire singing, from 'Manhunt' madness to 'Slip and Slide' fun. She became an organiser of the weekly 'Clap for our Carers', even using it as Tik Tok inspiration, and not once did she shy away from activities that she had never even heard of!



Socially Coco challenged herself. She made friends with students from all other year groups, and within weeks she was mentoring the younger students with their online learning and supporting them with THRIVE@QE activities such as colouring and mindfulness. She was able to help the welfare of others, whilst also looking after herself – the opportunity for learning life lessons is not being missed.

However, Coco's story is not unique; it is shared by international students all over the UK. At a time when most adults are struggling with life in lockdown, our international students remind us daily of the importance of turning a challenge into a resoundingly positive experience.

Lauren Blakeley, Senior Leadership Team Boarding Lead, Queen Ethelburga's



The QEGUK logo, Excellence in International Student Provision, denotes an educational establishment's commitment to the highest standards of performance, covering all aspects of international student provision, through adherence to a robust, holistic quality assurance process, culminating in a rigorous audit, once every three years. [See QEGUK website](#)

In February 2020, QEGUK conducted a rigorous audit of the Queen Ethelburga's Collegiate's International Student Provision. QEGUK identified Queen Ethelburga's Collegiate as an outstanding example of quality practice with regard to international students and in the context of the care provided to all of its pupils.





St Margaret's School

Independent Day & Boarding School for pupils aged 3 to 18

ST MARGARET'S SCHOOL, BUSHEY

Mari Nishikawa

Mari is a Japanese student in Year 12. She is studying Maths, Further Maths, Chemistry and Biology, and is applying to read Biochemical Sciences at some of the UK's top universities including Oxford, Imperial and UCL. She is an extremely gifted pianist who works well beyond Grade 8 level and studies at a Conservatoire at the weekends during term time. She has written this short account of how she has been spending her time in lockdown:

Since the lockdown started, I have been using the time to practise the piano more than usual. In general, when finishing any piece of music it is crucial for the player to try to understand the music deeply, for example the background and thoughts of the composer underlying the music. The current situation helped me take time to do that which resulted in understanding the music better at an earlier stage. I have been working on Sonatine by Ravel which consists of three movements since last year, and it was a challenge for me to think about the piece profoundly at the beginning as I had not played much 20th century music before. Having the time to sit in front of the music for a while was very helpful.

Choosing to play the piano more during the lockdown was a natural decision for me to make as I had wanted to focus on understanding the meaning and feel behind the music since before the lockdown. At the same time, I have managed to practise other keyboard skills such as transposition. Transposition is one of the keyboard skills I would like to get better at, and am taking this opportunity to improve more on that. I have learnt through the situation that there is a lot already which I can do during these unusual times, and with the support of my family, friends and School I have been able to do this. Although I hope things will return to normal soon, I now know that it is still possible for us to be productive and get better at something.



AEGIS MEMBER SCHOOLS LOCKDOWN NEWS

WELLS CATHEDRAL SCHOOL Stay Happy with the Percussion Ensemble



30 international percussionists from Wells Cathedral School, all pupils from Years 5 to the Upper Sixth, along with five percussion staff have created a joyous and uplifting collaborative rendition of Pharrell Williams' much loved song Happy.

Smoothly coordinated by Head of Student Experience and well-being and Co-ordinator of Percussion, Jayne Obradovic; arranged by Toby Kearney; and produced and edited expertly by lead technician, Tim Walker, the musicians submitted many audio and video clips that they had prepared and performed over the last few weeks, to create this wonderful and inspiring film.

The following staff and pupils took part in the film:

Emma Arden, Matt Hardy, Jayne Obradovic, Andrew Tween and Jon Whitfield



Click the image to watch the video, a gift from Jayne to the Upper Sixth Percussion leavers, and for us all to treasure!

Film Producer: Tim Walker

Pupils: Ellie Ager, Archie Blee, Laris Chan, Lloyd Chin, Theo Clark, Amelia Corr, Alfie Creber, Wilamena Dyer, Orlando Edwards, Hugo Paton Freeman, Rory Galloway, Sophie Harbridge, Markus Hoppe, Annabel Jeans, Paul Kemp King, Joshua Knott, Charlie Lawson, Luke McCarthy, Zara Merican, George Mycock, Myron Ong, Mika Sidique, Simon Spies, Stan Talman, Max Tunnicliffe, Theo Veitch, Jamie Webster, Haysus Wong and Mikey Yan

The performances were recorded in China, England, Germany, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Wales



SUTTON VALLENCE SCHOOL

International students and keeping in contact

During this strange and challenging time, we were determined to maintain our sense of cohesion and community with our overseas students, who are currently in various far-flung places of the world. We have always prided ourselves on the pastoral care that we offer our boarders, and this is something that remains paramount at this time.

To help students maintain contact with the School and each other, we have created an 'Overseas Boarding Forum' that operates through Microsoft Teams and Zoom. This has been set up so that all of our overseas students, regardless of nationality, can interact with each other and the staff here at Sutton Valence School. The forum works by invitation and is always initiated by a member of the teaching staff. It has proved to be a good way for us to interact in an informal manner.

Following a catch-up between staff and students, we then invite one of the Sixth Form pupils into the forum, to act as a co-host, and then the teaching staff leaves the meeting so that the students were free to discuss things and catch up, without the presence of a teacher. We found that students opened up a little more to a Sixth Form pupil, and each meeting provides fantastic, honest feedback about how our overseas pupils are coping. With the permission of the pupils, the Sixth Form pupil then feeds back any comments to the staff member.

Our forum has allowed all our overseas boarders to stay in contact more easily and have enabled us to identify any problems they may be facing, whether technological, emotional or otherwise. We feel that this has enabled us to maintain our strong connection with all members of the boarding community, irrespective of location, and as a consequence, is helping to limit the separation anxiety that could arise during this time. With the support and pastoral care offered from Sutton Valence School, we find our overseas pupils are still producing an excellent quality of work, just as they did when they were present in School.

Steven Head, Head of Boarding, Sutton Valence School



ST JOHN'S BEAUMONT

Boarder R-Ta Chantarojvanich helps his community in Thailand

R-Ta is a boarder in Year 7 at St John's Beaumont School in Old Windsor, UK. He lives with his family in Bangkok. After a telephone conversation with the Headmaster Mr Delaney, he was motivated to start helping the community around him during the Coronavirus crisis and later reported back.

Here is R-Ta's account of his experience:

In the past few weeks, I have started two small projects to support the medical staff in the hospital near me. This project was only made possible with the help of my two friends Nina and Numneung, and my Aunt who supported me with the recipes. On the 11th of April, I did my first charity project which was baking 1,000 banana cakes and delivering them to my local hospital.

The second project I did was on the 17th of April. This project is similar to the first except I cooked some Thai cuisine for the same hospital. The reason I went back to the same hospital was that they are currently housing around 150 patients, and among them are COVID-19 victims.

After handing in both the banana cakes and the Stir fry Garlic pork with rice and boiled eggs to the hospital (different days), we received a token of gratitude in the form of a certificate from the hospital.

During this project, I have learnt that what we take for granted, in this case, food, is what other people around the world would find very precious. Not only the patients who are suffering but also the medical staff who are working tirelessly in this crisis, are in need of proper meals. I enjoyed helping the community a lot and I'm hoping I can do more in the future.

Thank you, R-Ta

St John's Beaumont's Headmaster has awarded R-Ta a Headmaster's Commendation for displaying the Jesuit Pupil Profile values, being compassionate and generous. We are extremely proud of this wonderful pupil.



ST JOHN'S BEAUMONT



To learn more about R-Ta's work and watch a video about his projects, visit the SJB website:

[CLICK HERE](#)

BURGESS HILL GIRLS

Sharing our Cultures

For many of the boarders at Burgess Hill Girls the COVID-19 crisis has been an intense experience. Initially they had to cope with the worry of how their families were coping at home whilst they were here in the UK. Then they had to adapt to the UK lockdown followed by the challenges of finally getting back home. Now they are taking on the task of studying from home whilst missing all their friends at Burgess Hill Girls.

I am very proud of how the girls have coped with all these challenges. As you would expect we have been doing as much as we can to provide comfort and support. We relaunched the traditional English afternoon tea, boarding style, which means pink hot chocolate as opposed to Earl Grey, but still with biscuits of course! We also ran a 'Happiness Challenge', a month of daily challenges for everyone to complete, including our boarding staff.

Now the girls are back at their homes around the world we are trying to keep up the contact, with regular video calls to check everyone is safe and happy. The 'Challenges' are continuing too. This time in the form of a weekly Head's Challenge for the whole of the Burgess Hill Girls community. We dedicated one challenge, in particular, to our boarders; to 'share their culture' via pictures and videos of their new home school environments. It proved to be a fantastic opportunity for us all to learn more about each other. We have learned that the boarders love art, their pets, their homes, and most importantly, their food. When they come back to Burgess Hill Girls I will definitely be asking them to cook some of the lovely meals they have shared with us!

Though it has been a challenging period for us all, the crisis has definitely brought our boarding community closer together. This was exemplified by one of the final activities our boarders completed before they left for home. Boarders Michelle and Mariia taught other boarders and their teacher how to make origami birds. Together they decided the birds symbolised their journeys home. We will keep the birds safely together until the girls are able to return to Burgess Hill Girls. When we are all back together, we will let them 'fly' again.

Nicola Donson, Assistant Head, Pastoral & Boarding, Burgess Hill Girls



AEGIS MEMBER SCHOOLS LOCKDOWN NEWS



TAUNTON SCHOOL

Remote Learning & Wellbeing Hub

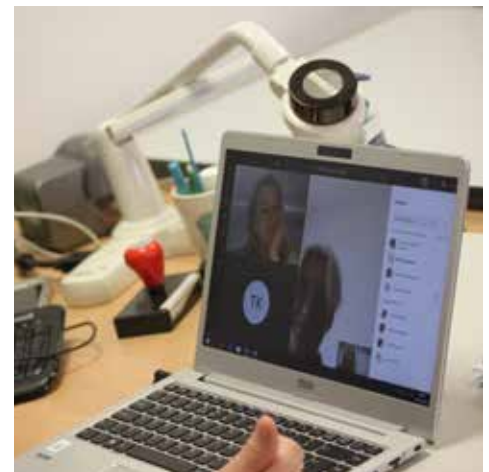
All students at Taunton School will be receiving the same high quality specialised teaching during this challenging time through carefully planned remote learning. The continuation of education through Microsoft Teams and the school intranet VLE, Firefly, allows us to deliver live lessons remotely to classes but also means that all sessions are recorded and available to those students whose time zones do not align with the timetable. Both teachers and students are able to share important resources and the platform allows the submission of assignments, tasks and prep to mimic the standard teaching experience as closely as possible.

Students still attend Form, Tutor Group and 1:1 sessions with their tutor so that they can discuss any issues both technical and academic, the students' progress and wellbeing. Attendance can be monitored also and it provides an opportunity for the children to reach out to one another to maintain the strong community feel that the school brings.

We are proud to say that in spite of the current situation, our pastoral care remains excellent. We have found new and innovative ways to provide our students with pastoral support via a specially designed online Wellbeing Hub, which includes access to invaluable resources such as Mental Health Nurses and Counsellors. House Parents and tutors will continue to interact with students on a regular basis, offering encouragement and familiarity to students across the globe.

The students have access to an extensive online Enrichment Programme offering almost 50 different activities, ranging from astronomy to Zumba to trading the financial markets. There is definitely something for everyone and the sessions are predominantly 'live', allowing an excellent opportunity for students to interact with their peers and further develop their English skills. The timing of the programme is tailored to accommodate students in different time zones and provides an excellent opportunity for students to learn a new skill and enhance their academic profile.

**Camilla Bryden, Head and Lyndsay White,
Deputy Head of Taunton School International**



LEIGHTON PARK SCHOOL

School Heads Up Face Shields Factory Hub

A PPE initiative to support NHS frontline staff tackling Covid-19 has quickly become a hub of pop up face shields factories involving 22 schools, one university and 3 commercial businesses across Berkshire! Raising £28,000 for materials through Go Fund Me and delivering over 32,000 shields, the partnership has made a difference to almost 500 organisations desperate for vital PPE. The shields have been welcomed by hospitals, hospices, care homes, GP surgeries, schools, councils and supermarkets.

With a modest ambition of 200 shields, Head of Design & Technology at Reading-based independent school, Leighton Park, Mark Smith, aimed to help from his workshop over the Easter break. "Not every superhero wears a cape, but they do all wear masks!" he joked as he began, but his cheerful spirit and can-do attitude quickly drew resident colleagues on the boarding school site to help. Using the DT department's laser cutter to create re-usable plastic headbands, the team attached A4 PVC sheets.

The generosity of the public, providing financial support for materials through GoFundMe, was matched by the enthusiasm of other schools and organisations to get involved and commit their resources. It wasn't long before there was a hub partnership in place, being directed from HQ at Leighton Park.

Response in the community has not ceased to be uplifting. Gareth Williams, Chief Commercial Officer at Choice Care Group, said: "These selfless acts of kindness from the local community are what keeps spirits high and momentum lifted. We all make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give. The school should be very proud of that."

Founder of the initiative, Mark Smith reflected, "It's such a community effort." The face shields initiative has even attracted national television coverage on BBC One's documentary series, 'Ross Kemp and Britain's Volunteer Army'.

Taylor Johnson, Marketing Assistant, Leighton Park School



LEIGHTON PARK
FOUNDED 1890

NEW BESPOKE SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

For AEGIS members

As part of our rigorous inspection process, AEGIS quality standards require all staff working for guardianship organisations and host families to be given training in safeguarding and child protection.

Training for host families is much more easily managed with online courses. Until now, our member Guardianship Organisations have reported that suitable and affordable courses are hard to find.

Due to popular demand, AEGIS has been working closely with Kings River Education to develop bespoke online and face to face training courses to suit the needs of guardianship organisations to satisfy our quality standards.

There are two choices of courses now available to book via the AEGIS office:

Guardianship Organisation Safeguarding Training: Suitable for office staff, local coordinators and host families and taxi companies, This online course is broken into sections to work through and an assessment via some quiz questions after each section.

Designated Safeguarding Lead Training: an online course that is delivered via an interactive virtual training session. This session will run over two three hour sessions on consecutive days.

Please get in touch with the AEGIS office if you are interested in learning more.



NEW AEGIS UNITE CONFERENCE

Date to be agreed...

We can't wait to announce a revised date for AEGIS Unite - our new conference taking place in London. This will be your chance to find out about all things guardianship. Face-to-face meetings plus much more! Watch this space for news on a date.



We need your support



AEGIS is a registered charity and, as such, we are reliant on membership subscriptions from schools and accreditation and membership from guardianship organisations.

If you are a school reading this and you are not yet a member then please do get in touch. Membership is low-cost and full of benefits to the school, including use of a special school logo showing your commitment to good guardianship.

[See our membership page and enrol today](#)

NEW AEGIS MEMBERS

- Congratulations to UK Guardians and Brighter Prospects for gaining Gold Standard re-accreditation.
- We welcome four new guardianship organisation members to AEGIS - congratulations to Edinburgh Guardian Angels and ECA Education Consultancy for achieving Gold Standard accreditation and Berkeley Guardians and The Guardian Family Network for gaining Preliminary accreditation.
- We welcome City of London School for Girls, Bedford School and Stamford Endowed Schools as new AEGIS members.



AEGIS has put together a COVID-19 Safe Charter for schools, parents and agents on the response from AEGIS and AEGIS accredited guardians. [Read the charter here](#)

Quarantine

Several AEGIS accredited guardianship organisations are planning to provide quarantine for returning students, should it still be a requirement. For the list of quarantine providers, please [click here](#)

#safeschools initiative

AEGIS is happy to support the fantastic Safe Schools UK initiative that brings the independent schools sector together, particularly during the COVID-19 situation, with a strategic and considered approach. [Read more](#)





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Keep up with all our news on our social media channels and [read our blog](#)



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