Homestay Screening, Approval and Monitoring Policy

SBTA & SELA | Study Tour Programs | Under-18 Students

Document control	Details
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Document owner	Principal Executive Officer / nominated Study Tour Coordinator
Approved by / effective date	To be completed following management approval
Review	Annually and following a significant incident or regulatory change
Applies to	Sydney, Brisbane and Gold Coast study tours; Academy-arranged and third-party homestays

Status: proposed policy for formal adoption. All requirements must be implemented and evidenced before they are represented to a partner as operational.

1. Purpose and commitment

The Sydney Business and Travel Academy (SBTA) and The Sydney English Language Academy (SELA), collectively referred to as the Academy in this policy, are committed to safe, suitable and supportive homestay arrangements for international study tour participants. The Academy prioritises the best interests, safety, dignity and views of children and young people.

This policy establishes minimum selection, screening, accommodation, supervision, approval, monitoring and emergency standards for host families, including when placements are organised by an external partner. A short tour duration does not reduce the need for effective safeguards.

2. Scope and allocation of responsibility

Arrangement	Screening and approval responsibility	Academy responsibility
Academy-arranged	The Academy or its contracted provider conducts and documents checks before placement.	Authorise placement only after satisfactory review; monitor welfare and address incidents.
Partner-arranged	The overseas school, tour organiser or appointed homestay agency conducts and documents screening and approval.	Obtain written allocation of duties, appropriate screening assurance and placement/emergency information; meet the Academy's own legal and contractual obligations.

No marketing, agreement or assurance may suggest that the Academy personally screened or inspected a home unless it has done so. Outsourcing does not automatically transfer or remove legal, regulatory, contractual or child-safety obligations.

3. Roles and accountability

- CEO / Principal Executive Officer: policy oversight, significant risk escalation, approval of material exceptions and resourcing.
- Study Tour Coordinator (appointed for each group): collects documentation, maintains the placement register, verifies readiness, conducts welfare contact and coordinates incidents.
- Homestay provider / overseas partner: completes assigned screening, host orientation, property checks, placement matching and 24-hour response arrangements, evidenced in writing.
- Host family / designated responsible adult: provides safe day-to-day care, supervision and timely reporting of concerns and changes.

- Students and parents/guardians: receive age-appropriate guidance, disclose relevant care needs through authorised channels and have accessible complaints contacts.

4. Minimum host family screening standards

4.1 Identity, household composition and background

- Confirm host identity and address with reliable documents; identify all permanent household members and relevant regular adult occupants; record adult names, ages and relationship to the host.
- Verify the appropriate state working-with-children clearance where required: NSW Working with Children Check or Queensland Blue Card/exemption as applicable. The relevant state requirements must be checked for each role and adult household member.
- Under the Academy's minimum standard, require satisfactory criminal background screening for responsible adults, subject to lawful consent, relevance and privacy rules. A police check does not replace WWCC/Blue Card verification.
- Re-check clearance validity before placements and on changes in household composition; do not place a student while critical screening evidence is unresolved.

4.2 Experience and ability to host

- Interview the host to assess communication, cultural sensitivity, supervision capacity, ability to support minors and previous hosting or equivalent caring experience.
- Where previous hosting experience is absent, use references, relevant childcare/caring experience, induction and additional assessment to establish equivalent capability.

4.3 Student medical and pre-arrival information

- Before arrival, obtain parent/guardian-authorised information about allergies, dietary restrictions, chronic conditions, medication, accessibility needs, emergency actions and relevant contacts.
- Share only necessary information securely with the responsible host and designated staff. Obtain acknowledgement that the host understands required actions and emergency escalation; do not ask hosts to undertake medical tasks outside their competence or authorisation.

4.4 Supervision and transport

- Nominate a responsible adult for every placement; record arrangements for after-class hours, evenings, weekends, pick-up, drop-off, transport and any approved independent travel.
- Children must not be left without age-appropriate supervision. For short tours, the Academy's default is no overnight absence of the responsible adult and no prolonged periods home alone; any proposed alternative requires a documented individual risk assessment and parent/guardian agreement, where appropriate.
- No unapproved overnight stays elsewhere; hosts must report unexplained absence promptly and activate the missing-student response procedure.

4.5 Living environment and safety

- Inspect or obtain documented inspection evidence confirming sleeping arrangements, privacy, cleanliness, accessible bathroom, safe exits, working smoke alarms, household security and safe storage of hazards.
- Disclose smoking/vaping in or around the home, pets, other students/residents, pool/water hazards, relevant accessibility issues and any material changes before placement.
- Provide clean bedding, sufficient meals consistent with the tour agreement, drinking water, suitable heating/cooling and a practicable route to the program venue.

4.6 Emergency readiness

- Record host phone, backup adult, partner coordinator and Academy emergency contact; provide 24-hour escalation coverage during the tour.
- Confirm emergency procedures for illness, injury, missing student, fire, child-safety disclosure, host unavailability and urgent transfer to alternative accommodation.

5. Screening and approval workflow

Step	Required action	Evidence
1. Recruit	Receive host application or third-party host proposal.	Application / provider statement
2. Verify	Complete identity, household, clearance and background requirements.	Screening record and verification log
3. Assess	Interview host, review references and hosting capacity.	Suitability assessment
4. Inspect	Perform physical inspection or assess credible, current third-party inspection evidence.	Signed inspection checklist
5. Match	Review student needs, household risks, location and supervision.	Placement/matching record
6. Approve	Authorised officer records approval, conditions or refusal.	Approval sign-off and date
7. Orient	Supply host instructions and student emergency contacts.	Host acknowledgement
8. Monitor	Confirm arrival; undertake welfare checks and respond to concerns.	Contact/incident log

Critical safeguards cannot be waived for convenience or to meet tour deadlines. A home with unresolved serious concerns must not be used.

6. Third-party homestay arrangements

Before students are allocated to partner-arranged homes, the Academy shall obtain a written responsibility matrix or agreement identifying who screens adults, verifies child-related clearances, inspects homes, assesses suitability, supplies host induction, supervises students, maintains records and manages emergencies.

The partner must provide a signed screening assurance and placement list identifying each host, address, named supervising adult, contact details, transport arrangements, medical-information handover status, and 24-hour escalation contact. Sensitive underlying screening documents should be shared only where necessary, lawful and secure. The Academy may request redacted verification logs, audit access or further evidence where risk requires.

If satisfactory assurance is absent, the Study Tour Coordinator escalates the matter and the Academy must not represent the placement as verified. A partner-arranged placement must not proceed under an Academy-endorsed program until material safety concerns and responsibility gaps are resolved.

7. Orientation and behavioural expectations

Hosts receive written guidance on respectful care, safe boundaries, privacy, non-discrimination, age-appropriate supervision, food and medication arrangements, transport, photographs and social media, complaints, prohibited discipline, contact with students and immediate reporting of concerns. Students receive accessible orientation in a language they understand wherever practicable.

Hosts must not use physical punishment, humiliating treatment, coercion or exploitative work; must not enter bedrooms without appropriate reason and notice except emergencies; and must not permit unapproved adult occupants or overnight guests where doing so would introduce an unassessed risk.

8. Student welfare monitoring

- Confirm arrival and placement safety on the first day; undertake a confidential student welfare check within 24 hours and further checks proportionate to the length and risk profile of the tour.
- Provide at least two routes for students to raise concerns (for example, tour supervisor and an Academy contact) without relying solely on the host or partner.
- Record concerns, actions, owner and closure; ensure the student is consulted on any replacement placement, consistent with safety and their best interests.

9. Incidents, complaints and emergency response

For immediate danger contact emergency services on 000. Protect the student first, arrange medical or protective assistance as required, and promptly notify the designated Academy incident lead and the party responsible for accommodation. Report to child protection, police, regulators and parents/guardians where legally required and appropriate for the circumstances; do not promise confidentiality that would obstruct safeguarding.

Any allegation against a host, unexplained absence, unsafe environment or loss of an approved supervising adult triggers immediate risk assessment. If safety cannot be assured, move the student to a verified alternative with appropriate supervision; document decisions, notifications and follow-up. Complaints must be handled under the Academy's Under-18 Complaints Procedure and relevant child-safety processes.

10. Changes, review and withdrawal of approval

Hosts and partners must immediately report changes in adult household members, residence, clearance status, supervision availability, pets, smoking exposure, significant health/safety risks or incidents. The Academy or screening provider shall reassess before continued placement where a change affects suitability. Host approval may be suspended or withdrawn for non-disclosure, failed checks, serious complaints or unsafe conditions.

11. Privacy, information management and audit

Medical, identity, police and working-with-children information is sensitive. Collect only what is needed, obtain appropriate notices/consents, apply access restrictions, store securely, document disclosure to partners and retain/dispose of records under applicable law and Academy retention requirements. Record verification outcomes rather than unnecessary copies of identity or criminal-history documents. Cross-border disclosures require particular care.

The Study Tour Coordinator maintains a Homestay Approval and Placement Register recording responsibilities, verification dates/status, inspection, host approval, student allocation, contact and welfare checks, changes and incidents. Management reviews arrangements at least annually and after material incidents.

12. Related documents

- SBTA & SELA Child Protection and Child Safety Policy
- SBTA & SELA Under-18 Complaints Procedure
- Study Tour Parent/Guardian Consent and Medical Information Form
- Host Family Screening Form, Property Inspection Checklist and Host Family Code of Conduct
- Homestay Approval and Placement Register; Study Tour Emergency Response Plan

13. Legislative and practice framework

Implementation must take account of the jurisdiction, program type, visa/guardianship arrangements and current law. Reference frameworks include the NSW Child Safe Standards and the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian; NSW Working With Children Check arrangements; and Queensland Blue Card requirements for child homestay accommodation. These sources do not make every internal requirement in this policy a statutory obligation.

Official reference links: https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/ ; https://www.qld.gov.au/jobs/blue-card/required/individuals-businesses/child-accommodation

Appendix A. Partner-arranged homestay verification form

Group / program: _____ Dates: _____

Overseas partner / homestay provider: _____

Responsible screening contact: _____ 24-hour phone: _____

Confirm for every placement	Yes / No / Pending	Evidence reference / remarks
Household identities and occupants verified		
State child-related clearance obligations checked and applicable clearances verified		
Criminal background screening completed under approved policy		
Experience / equivalent capability assessed		
Property safety inspection current		
Smoking, pets and hazards disclosed to student/guardian		
Student medical needs securely transmitted and acknowledged		
Named adult supervision and transport arranged		
Emergency response and alternative placement available		
Student welfare monitoring and complaints contacts established		

Partner authorised representative: _____ Date: _____

Academy reviewer / decision: _____ Date: _____

Decision: Approved / Approved subject to conditions / Not approved

Conditions or outstanding actions: _____

Appendix B. Quick placement-readiness checklist

☐ Signed responsibility matrix is on file.

☐ Host contact/address list is complete and securely accessible to authorised staff.

☐ All screening assurance and inspection items are complete; no critical outstanding checks.

☐ Parents/guardians provided relevant accommodation and emergency information.

☐ Health needs and action plans acknowledged by assigned host.

☐ Pickup/drop-off, supervision and 24-hour contact arrangements tested.

☐ Alternate accommodation and escalation arrangements confirmed.

☐ Student arrival and 24-hour welfare checks assigned.

Readiness confirmed by: _____ Date: _____