

Staff Guidelines for Supporting International Learners

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These guidelines are provided to help all Ruawai College staff understand how to support international learners safely, respectfully, and consistently. All staff have a role in helping international learners feel welcome, included, safe, and supported in their learning and wellbeing. Concerns about an international learner must be reported promptly to the International Director or designated staff member.

1. Purpose

Explain that the purpose is to help all staff understand their responsibilities when supporting international students at Ruawai College.

Include that the guidelines support student safety, wellbeing, learning, attendance, communication, cultural adjustment, and compliance with the Education (Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners) Code of Practice 2021. NZQA says the Code is intended to

protect international learners and ensure they have a positive student experience and are supported to meet their goals.

2. Staff Responsibilities

Set out what all staff are expected to do.

For example, staff should:

- know who the international students are
- make students feel welcome and included
- monitor attendance, behaviour, learning, and wellbeing
- report concerns early
- follow emergency procedures
- maintain student privacy
- avoid making assumptions based on language, culture, or background
- refer students to the International Director when extra support is needed

3. Key International Staff Contacts

Include a simple list of who staff should contact.

For example:

- International Director
- International Operations
- Homestay Coordinator
- International Student Administrator
- Designated pastoral care staff member
- Principal
- Guidance Counsellor
- Office emergency contact
- After-hours emergency contact

This section should make it very clear who staff go to first if they are worried about a student.

4. Welcoming and Including International Learners

This section should guide staff on how to help students settle.

Include:

- greeting students by name
- checking they understand routines



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- explaining school expectations clearly
- pairing them with supportive classmates
- including them in class activities
- being patient with language barriers
- encouraging participation without putting them under pressure
- checking that they understand homework, assessments, trips, and notices

5. Classroom Support

Include expectations for teachers.

For example:

- use clear instructions
- avoid slang or idioms without explanation
- write key information on the board or online
- check understanding privately
- provide examples of completed work
- allow processing time
- support vocabulary development
- monitor progress
- tell the International Director or Dean if the student is struggling

6. Attendance and Absences

Staff should know that attendance issues for international learners need quick follow-up.

Include:

- mark attendance accurately
- report unexplained absences promptly
- notify the office or International Director if an international student is missing from class unexpectedly
- do not assume the student is at home or with their homestay
- follow the school's attendance and emergency procedures

This links closely to student safety and supervision.

7. Wellbeing and Pastoral Concerns

Include signs staff should watch for, such as:

- withdrawal



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- sadness or distress
- homesickness
- friendship issues
- bullying or racism
- changes in behaviour
- tiredness
- poor attendance
- falling achievement
- concerns about homestay
- concerns about food, transport, money, sleep, or health
- student saying they feel unsafe

Staff should report concerns to the International Director or designated pastoral staff member. They should not try to manage serious wellbeing concerns alone.

8. Cultural Awareness

Include guidance that staff should be culturally respectful and aware that students may:

- come from different school systems
- have different expectations about teachers and authority
- feel embarrassed asking for help
- need time to adjust to New Zealand classroom culture
- experience culture shock
- miss family, food, language, and familiar routines

Staff should avoid jokes, comments, or assumptions about nationality, English ability, family wealth, food, religion, or culture.

9. Communication with Students

Include practical communication expectations:

- speak clearly
- check understanding
- use plain language
- give instructions in writing where possible
- avoid sarcasm or unclear humour when explaining important matters
- ask open questions
- give students time to respond
- use interpreters or translated information where needed for serious matters

10. Communication with Parents, Agents, and Caregivers

This section should make clear that staff should not independently manage formal communication with overseas parents, agents, or homestay caregivers unless this is part of their role.

Include:

- routine classroom matters may be shared through normal school systems
- serious concerns must go through the International Director
- homestay concerns must go through the Homestay Coordinator or International Director
- urgent matters must follow emergency contact procedures
- all important communication should be recorded

11. Homestay and Accommodation Concerns

Staff should know what to do if a student talks about problems at homestay.

Include examples:

- not enough food
- feeling unsafe
- conflict with caregiver
- transport problems
- student being left alone for long periods
- student wanting to move
- student staying somewhere else without approval
- student being asked to babysit or work inappropriately

Staff should report this immediately to the International Director or Homestay Coordinator.

12. Trips, Sports, Activities, and EOTC

Include guidance for staff taking international students on trips or activities.

Staff should check:

- the student has permission
- the International Department knows about the trip
- transport and supervision are appropriate
- emergency contact details are available
- medical needs are known
- the student understands expectations
- overnight stays are approved



- homestay or caregiver arrangements are clear

International students should not be taken away overnight or placed in alternative accommodation without prior approval.

13. Emergencies

Include a short reference to the International Student Emergency Contact Procedures.

Staff should know to:

- call 111 if there is immediate danger
- ensure the student is safe
- contact the International Director or senior leader
- contact the office if during school hours
- record what happened
- do not delay action while trying to find the “right” person

14. Privacy and Confidentiality

Include that international student information must be treated carefully.

Staff should not discuss a student’s personal, family, visa, medical, homestay, financial, or wellbeing matters with other students or staff who do not need to know.

15. Complaints and Concerns

Staff should know that international students have the right to raise concerns and complaints.

Include:

- listen respectfully
- take concerns seriously
- do not dismiss concerns because of language or culture
- refer complaints to the International Director
- record concerns
- ensure the student knows they can get support

NZQA notes that schools enrolling international students must be signatories to the Code, which covers learner wellbeing and safety, physical and mental health, safe and accessible learning environments, and the distinct needs of international learners.

16. What Staff Must Report

This is a useful section to make expectations clear.

Staff must report:

- unexplained absence
- student missing or uncontactable
- wellbeing concerns
- bullying, racism, harassment, or discrimination
- injury or illness
- homestay concerns
- student wanting to move accommodation
- student planning travel without approval
- visa or insurance concerns mentioned by the student
- academic failure or sudden decline
- behaviour concerns
- any safety concern

17. Record Keeping

Include that staff should record important concerns, actions, and communications according to school procedures.

Records may include:

- attendance notes
- pastoral notes
- incident reports
- emails
- phone call summaries
- referrals
- follow-up actions

18. Staff Training

Include that relevant staff will receive information or training on:

- the Code
- international learner wellbeing
- emergency procedures
- homestay and accommodation expectations
- attendance and safety reporting
- cultural awareness
- complaints and concerns



- who to contact

19. Review

These will be reviewed annually, after any serious incident, or when Code requirements or school procedures change.