



Sooke Schools
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM
Many Nations. 🍁 One Remarkable Experience

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM



ORIENTATION HANDBOOK
2026-2027

HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook is designed to support international students, parents or guardians, and homestay families as students prepare for and begin their experience in the Sooke School District. It brings together important information about programs, daily life, expectations, and support services in one place.

You do not need to read this handbook from start to finish in one sitting. Some sections will be more relevant at different times before and after arrival in Canada. We recommend bookmarking this document and returning to it as questions arise.

TO HELP YOU FIND WHAT YOU NEED QUICKLY



Students will find helpful information about school life, homestay living, adjusting to life in Canada, and well-being.



Parents and guardians may wish to focus on program overviews, student support, safety information, and communication expectations.



Homestay families will find guidance related to hosting, daily routines, and supporting students during their stay.

Emergency contact information and support resources are included in a dedicated section later in this handbook. We encourage all readers to review and bookmark that section once students have arrived.

CONTENTS

Welcome

Page 3

Before You Leave Home

Page 4

Arriving in Canada & First Days

Page 6

School Orientation & School Life

Page 9

Life With Your Homestay Family

Page 11

Life in Canada

Page 14

Adjusting to Life Abroad & Well-Being

Page 17

Safety, Support & Emergency Information

Page 19

Student Participation Agreement

Page 21

Websites, Resources & Quick Links

Page 22



WELCOME TO THE SOOKE SCHOOL DISTRICT INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM!

On behalf of our schools and community, I am very pleased to welcome you to the Sooke School District. Choosing to study in another country is a courageous and exciting step, and we are honoured that you have chosen to spend this important chapter of your life with us. Whether this is your first time away from home or one of many international experiences, please know that you are not doing this alone.

Our International Student Program team, school staff, and homestay families are here to support you academically, socially, and personally as you settle into life in Canada. We believe that learning happens best when students feel safe, welcomed, and connected—and we are committed to helping you feel at home in our schools and community.

Our International Student Program team works closely with our schools and is here to support you throughout your time with us.

MEET THE PEOPLE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU



Amber O'Quinn
District Vice-Principal



Diana Pauze
Homestay Coordinator
**Edward Milne
Community School
(EMCS)**



Marnie Snobelen
Homestay Coordinator
**Royal Bay Secondary
School/Dunsmuir**



Robin Bayne
Homestay Coordinator
**Belmont Secondary
School/Spencer/CML**



Kaia Gyorfi
Health and Wellness
Coordinator



Laura Schwertfeger
District Principal

BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

IMPORTANT PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

Where and When to Arrive in Canada

You should book your flight to arrive at the Victoria Airport (YYJ). Please see our International Arrivals and Departures Calendar on our [website](#) for the earliest and recommended arrival dates.

Booking Your Flights

Once you have booked your flight according to our required dates, please have your agent (if you have one) upload a copy of the itinerary to your student profile in True North. We will ensure that your host family is available to meet you at the Victoria Airport.

Canadian Cell Phone Number

For safety reasons, students are required to carry a cell phone with an active Canadian phone number. During our orientation, we will provide time for you to sign up with PhoneBox using an “unlocked” phone you brought from home or a new phone purchased in Canada. Apps requiring Wi-Fi and foreign telephone numbers are not sufficient replacements for a Canadian cell phone number.

Medical Insurance

As a part of your participation in the International Student Program, you are covered by medical insurance that our office will arrange. Coverage will begin on the day you arrive in Canada. Please note that the coverage only begins when you have left your home country. When you arrive and attend the orientation program, you will receive more information about the insurance coverage, including your insurance card and policy number.

Government Travel Protocols

Government travel protocols are subject to change. This version of the Student Orientation Handbook is written based on current information available. **It is the responsibility of the student and their natural parents to be aware of and to comply with the requirements in place at the time of entry into Canada.**





Packing

Please pack the following in your carry-on baggage:

- Passport & Study Permit (or approval letter)
- Travel itinerary
- Printed copies of:
 - Letter of Acceptance
 - Custodianship documents
 - Homestay Family Profile
 - SD62 Emergency Contact information (Page 19 of this Handbook)
- Money (make sure you have enough currency to take a taxi, use the phone or purchase food in the event you miss a flight during your journey)
- Cell phone, laptop and chargers
- Change of clothes (in case of delayed luggage)
- Food/snacks and a water bottle
- Small bottle of hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes
- Prescription medication — if you currently use prescription medication, make sure to visit your doctor at home to get the maximum amount that you are allowed to bring into Canada
- Extra glasses or contact lenses if you wear them

Communication and Relationship Building

Please connect with your homestay family (Zoom, Google Meet, Teams, etc) before departure to get to know one another or, if a returning student, to get any updates. Make sure you exchange contact information (email, cell phone number) and discuss how you will connect on arrival using a Wi-Fi-based app (WeChat, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, etc).

AIRPORT / FLIGHT BEST PRACTICES

Wear a mask/wash hands frequently

While airlines and airports no longer require masks, it is still recommended you wear a well-fitting mask during your travels. Wash your hands frequently (before, during and after each flight).

Stay safe and clean

Make sure your cell phone is charged. Have some disinfectant wipes to clean your personal area. Touch as few surfaces as possible.

Don't be afraid to ask for help

Airports always have a Customer Service counter to help passengers. Ask for help if you need it.



ARRIVING IN CANADA & FIRST DAYS

IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS

At your first Canadian point of entry

- Connect to airport's free Wi-Fi
- Follow the signs, which will take you to a Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA) officer.
- Have all of your documents ready
- You may be directed to an electronic kiosk to answer some questions and scan your passport.

➤ Usually, you will need to pick up your luggage, proceed through Customs and then drop your luggage for your domestic flight to Victoria (ask for help if you need to)

➤ Once you have found your gate, you will likely have a bit of a wait for your flight to Victoria. It's a good time to go to the washroom, purchase a snack or a meal if you are hungry. You will need Canadian currency or a credit card.

➤ Text your homestay family to confirm you have arrived in Canada and that your flight to Victoria is on time.

➤ Wait in the seats near the gate and listen for the boarding announcements. When your flight number is called, you will approach the gate and again show your boarding pass to Victoria and your passport.

Please make sure the Immigration Officer prints and gives you your **STUDY PERMIT BEFORE** exiting the immigration area.

(In some airports, it is before picking up luggage; in other airports, it is after you pick up luggage. In Vancouver, it is before you pick up your luggage.

The Immigration Officer will not necessarily give you your study permit automatically. You might need to ask for it and show the Letter of Approval. Students who do not receive their study permit upon entry will need to make arrangements to leave Canada at a later date and at their own cost, as study permits are only issued at border entry points.



WELCOME
TO
Canada



ARRIVING IN VICTORIA

After you land at the Victoria airport, you will go through arrivals and collect your luggage. **Your homestay family will meet you in the Arrivals area of the airport. If this is your first time staying with them, they will be holding a sign with your name so you can easily recognize them.**

It is normal to feel tired or a bit overwhelmed after a long journey. Take your time, follow airport signs, and don't worry if things feel unfamiliar at first. If you have any questions or need help at the airport, airport staff are available to assist you. Once you meet your homestay family, they will help you get settled and bring you to your new home.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING JET LAG

Here are some tips to prevent jet lag when arriving in Canada:

1. During your flight, switch your clock to Victoria's time zone, so you become accustomed to the difference.
2. Drink water before and during the flight.
3. Get up and move around frequently during the flight to avoid any leg cramps.
4. Get outside if you arrive during the day, so that you can adjust to the sunlight.
5. Make sure to relax the first few days and do not overwhelm yourself.
6. Drink water when you arrive, which you can drink straight from the tap.



Victoria Airport, Arrivals

YOUR FIRST DAYS IN CANADA

Most international students arrive in Victoria on a Saturday or Sunday. The first few days are intentionally designed to help you rest, adjust to the time difference, and begin settling into daily life before school and orientation begin.

ARRIVAL WEEKEND

After arriving in Victoria, you will be welcomed by your homestay family at the airport and brought to your new home. The arrival weekend is meant to be quiet and low-key. This time allows you to rest after travel, unpack, and begin getting to know your host family and surroundings.

Your homestay family understands that you may be tired or feeling overwhelmed, and there is no expectation to do or remember everything right away. Focus on resting, eating regular meals, and getting comfortable in your new space.

SETTLING IN WITH YOUR HOST FAMILY

Following your arrival, students typically spend Monday and Tuesday with their homestay families before orientation begins. These days help students adjust to the new time zone and start learning about daily routines in Canada.

During this time, your host family may:

- Show you the neighbourhood and local area
- Explain household routines and expectations
- Help you with transportation, meals, and daily schedules

This is also a good time to ask questions and let your host family know how you are feeling. Rest and adjustment are important parts of a successful start.



STUDENT ORIENTATION & SCHOOL LIFE

NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION

New Student Orientation usually takes place over three days, beginning later in the week. Orientation is designed to help students feel prepared, informed, and confident as they begin school.

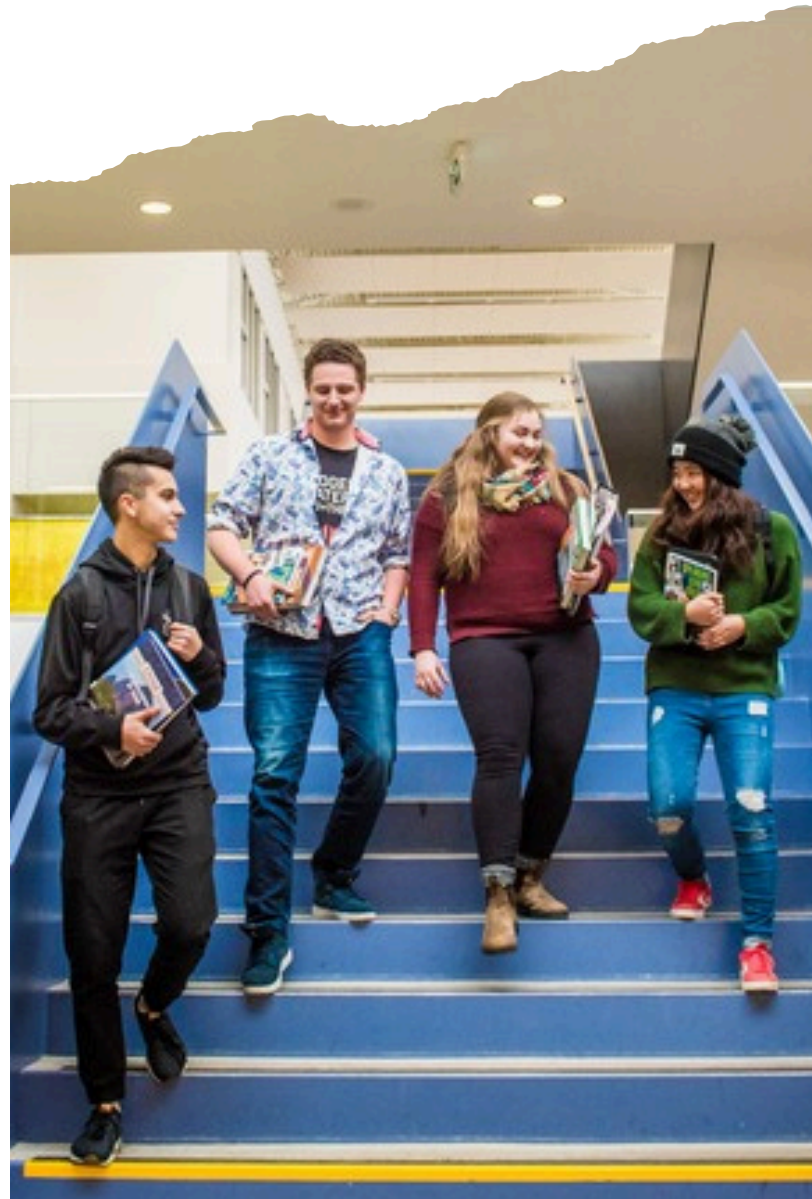
The New Student Orientation is scheduled for:
Wednesday, September 2 - Friday, September 4.

Homestay families will receive more detailed information about transportation and daily logistics for orientation prior to the students' arrival.

During orientation, students will participate in sessions that introduce important topics, including:

- School routines, schedules, and timetables
- Medical insurance
- Health, safety, and wellness
- Cultural adjustment
- Staying connected: accessing program and school information
- Canadian cell phone plan options
- Homestay expectations
- Program participation agreement
- Program activities and extracurricular opportunities

Orientation is a supportive and welcoming environment. Students are not expected to know everything right away; information will be shared gradually, and staff are available to answer questions.



The first week is about settling in, learning, and getting comfortable. Everything does not need to feel clear or familiar right away.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

International students in the Sooke School District 62 attend one of three secondary schools. Students are registered at their home school; however, some activities—such as New Student Orientation—may take place at another school.

Our Secondary Schools

Belmont Secondary School

Belmont Secondary School is a large secondary school and often hosts New Student Orientation and district-wide international student activities.



Royal Bay Secondary School

Royal Bay Secondary School is a modern secondary school serving students in the West Shore area.



Edward Milne Community School

Edward Milne Community School is a smaller secondary school in Sooke with a strong sense of community and student support.



COURSE PLANNING REQUIREMENTS



It is important to communicate any courses that are required by your home country or school well in advance of arrival. This helps ensure appropriate course placement and scheduling.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Textbooks are supplied by the school and are loaned to students for the school year. Students are responsible for returning borrowed textbooks before departure and may be required to cover the cost of any textbooks that are not returned.

We recommend that students wait until arriving in Canada to purchase school supplies. Common supplies include:

- 3-ring binders
- 8½" × 11" lined paper
- Dividers
- Pencils and pens

COURSE TIMETABLES AND CHANGING COURSES

Secondary schools in the district operate on a semester system, meaning students study four courses from September to January and four courses from February to June. Some courses, such as Leadership or Music, may run outside the regular timetable before or after school.

Students will receive their course timetable during orientation. Timetables are created based on the course selections submitted with the application and course availability. Information about requesting course changes will be shared during school-based orientation sessions.

LIFE WITH YOUR HOMESTAY FAMILY



Your homestay family plays an important role in your experience in Canada. This section is for students and families to understand what daily life together looks like.

Staying with a local family can be one of the most rewarding aspects of your time here, offering daily opportunities to learn about Canadian life, build relationships, and feel at home in a new country.

Homestay families are carefully screened, trained, and supported by our program staff. They work closely with homestay coordinators to provide a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment for students. Each family is different, but all are committed to helping students feel comfortable and included—your home away from home.

COMMUNICATION

You will receive a profile of your homestay family based on the information provided in your application. It is important to contact your homestay family before you arrive so you can begin getting to know each other. This early communication can make your adjustment to living in a new home much easier.

Once you arrive, your homestay family will want to know how you are doing, how school is going, who your friends are, and whether you have any questions or concerns. Talking with people you live with helps you feel safe, supported, and confident.

The best time for these conversations is often during the evening meal, and students are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity whenever possible.

Homestay families also need to know where you are, who you are with, and when you expect to be home. This helps ensure your safety and well-being. If you plan to go out with friends after school or in the evening, it is important to share these details with your homestay family in advance.

Speaking as much as possible with your homestay family and others in the home is also a great way to improve your English. Making mistakes is a normal part of learning a language—your host family will understand and support you as you improve.

EXPECTATIONS

One reason for coming to Canada and living with a homestay family is to experience Canadian life. You may already have some ideas about what this will be like; however, unless you have spent a lot of time in Canada before, daily life may be different from what you expect.

Many differences will feel positive, while others may feel challenging at first. Both are a normal part of living in another country.

Homestay families are asked to treat students as family members. This means students are generally expected to follow similar household expectations as others in the home.

Expectations of teenagers in Canada may differ from those in your home country. In many Canadian families, young people are expected to make their own lunch, do their own laundry, clean their own room, and help with dishes after meals. While each family is different, you will likely be asked to do some of these tasks.

You will not be asked to do any “big” household work – just those we would consider personal responsibilities and contributions to the family living environment.

HEAT & ELECTRICITY

Canadian homes are commonly heated using central heating systems or electric baseboard heaters. Many Canadians prefer cooler indoor temperatures and wear warm clothing such as sweaters or slippers inside the home. If you feel cold, let your host family know—they can help with extra blankets or suggestions.

Canada's electrical system uses 110 volts and 60 hertz, the same as in the United States. Canadians are generally energy-conscious. Turning off lights when leaving a room, avoiding unnecessary heat use, and switching off electronic devices when not in use are common practices.

FOOD AND DRINK

Most families eat three meals a day. Breakfast is usually quick and light on weekdays and may be self-serve, such as cereal or toast. Many students bring a packed lunch to school. Teenagers in Canada are generally expected to prepare their own lunches using food provided by the homestay family.

Dinner is typically the main meal of the day and an important time for conversation and connection. Families may eat leftovers for lunch or dinner on another day. Students are encouraged to be home on time for dinner whenever possible. If you plan to be out with friends, it is important to inform your homestay family well in advance.

Canadian food is very diverse. Families may enjoy meals from many cultures throughout the week. Grocery stores carry ingredients from around the world. Please inform your host family of any food allergies and share your food preferences with them. Meals are usually served “home-style,” meaning you help yourself from dishes on the table.

Note: Tap water in Victoria is safe to drink and of very high quality. Many Canadians choose tap water instead of bottled water for health and environmental reasons. Please feel comfortable drinking tap water if your host family serves it.

PRIVACY

Privacy is important in Canadian homes. Always knock on bedroom doors and wait to be invited in. Do not enter bedrooms or bathrooms without permission. Family members' bedrooms are private spaces, and your host family will respect your bedroom as well.

Host parents, as adults, may enter your bedroom when you are not home for practical reasons, such as checking that heat or electrical items are turned off.

IN THE BATHROOM AND LAUNDRY ROOM

Most Canadians shower in the morning before school or work. Talk with your host family about the best time to shower so everyone has access to the bathroom. If you prefer to shower in the evening, try to do so before 9:00 p.m. to avoid disturbing others.

Showers in Canada are usually around 10 minutes long. Hot water tanks are often limited in size, so long showers may use up hot water for the entire household.

Please leave the bathroom clean and dry after use. Remove loose hair from sinks or tubs and place it in the garbage. Only toilet paper should be flushed—other items, including feminine hygiene products, should be placed in the garbage.

Canadians typically do laundry once a week. Discuss with your host family whether they will do laundry for you or when you are expected to do it yourself.



FAMILY LIFE AND INVOLVEMENT

Spending time with your host family is an important part of the homestay experience. Students are encouraged to spend time in shared spaces, participate in conversations, help in the kitchen, and take part in family activities.

Canadian family life is generally informal. Family members may joke with one another and interact in a relaxed way, while still showing respect. Many families have pets and treat them as members of the family. Please be kind and respectful toward animals in the home.

Students are encouraged to take part in family activities, weekend outings, and community events when invited. Participating helps build relationships and gives you a fuller experience of life in Canada.

COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE

Homestay families provide Wi-Fi access; however, they may set limits on internet use, especially late at night. If internet use becomes a concern, the homestay family may contact the homestay coordinator, and parents or guardians may be notified.

HOUSEHOLD CHORES

Students are expected to keep their own rooms clean and may be asked to help with shared household tasks such as clearing dishes or cleaning shared bathrooms. Chores will be appropriate to the student's age and are part of contributing to family life.

BABYSITTING

International students must not be expected to take responsibility for younger children at any time.

CURFEWS

Many Canadian families go to bed earlier than in some other cultures. Quiet time in the home usually begins around 10:00 or 11:00 p.m. If you need to stay up later to complete homework, please be respectful and keep noise to a minimum.

On school nights, students are generally expected to be home for dinner. Weekend curfews are typically around 10:00 or 11:00 p.m., depending on the family. Your homestay family will discuss curfews with you and explain their expectations.



LIFE IN CANADA

Living in Canada may feel familiar in some ways and very different in others. This section offers an overview of daily life in the Victoria area, including community, transportation, weather, social norms, and practical information that will help you feel more comfortable as you settle in.

COMMUNITY

Victoria is the capital city of British Columbia and is known for its natural beauty, coastal setting, and strong sense of community. The city is surrounded by ocean, forests, and mountains, and many people enjoy spending time outdoors throughout the year.

Victoria has a mild climate compared to many other parts of Canada and is home to a diverse population, including students, families, and people from many cultural backgrounds. Downtown Victoria offers shops, cafés, restaurants, and historic buildings, while nearby neighbourhoods provide access to parks, beaches, and walking trails.

TRANSPORTATION

The Greater Victoria area has a reliable public bus system that makes it easy for students to get around the community. Information about routes, schedules, and fares is available online through [BC Transit](#).

Some homestay families live within walking or biking distance of school, and many students walk or bike each day. In other cases, students may take public transit or, where available, school bus transportation based on their address. Students should be prepared for a commute of up to 30 minutes to and from school.

Your homestay family and school staff can help you understand the best transportation options for your situation.

WEATHER

Victoria has the mildest climate of all major Canadian cities. Winter temperatures typically range between 2°C and 8°C, while summers are warm but not extreme, with average temperatures around 22°C.

The weather in Victoria can change quickly. It is common to experience cool or rainy conditions in the morning, followed by sunshine later in the day. Dressing in layers and carrying a light rain jacket is very helpful.





INTERNET AND TECHNOLOGY USE

Internet access is widely available in homes, schools, and public spaces. Students are encouraged to balance screen time with school responsibilities, family life, and rest. Spending too much time online, especially late at night, can affect sleep and make it harder to focus at school.

MONEY BASICS AND BANKING

It is a good idea to bring some Canadian currency for travel and your first few days in Canada. Many students also use a credit or debit card that parents or guardians can add funds to during their stay.

Students staying for one year or longer may choose to open a Canadian bank account. Your homestay family or program staff can help explain how this works if needed.

PHARMACIES AND HEALTH BASICS

Pharmacies are easy to find throughout the community. Pharmacists can provide advice on non-prescription medications, and some are able to prescribe medication for common illnesses.

POST OFFICES AND MAIL

Post offices are located throughout the community and can be used to send letters, postcards, or packages. More information about mailing services is available through Canada Post.

TIPPING

In Canada, it is common to tip 15–20% for good service in restaurants, taxis, hair salons, and hotels (for services such as helping with luggage). Tipping is a way to show appreciation for good service.



SOCIAL NORMS AND EVERYDAY ETIQUETTE

Canadians are generally friendly, relaxed, and informal, but there are some common customs to be aware of.

Helpful customs include:

- Knocking before entering a home and waiting to be invited inside
- Removing shoes when entering someone's home
- Saying "excuse me" if you bump into someone
- Holding the door open for others
- Greeting family members in the morning and evening
- Using a tissue to blow your nose rather than sniffing in public

Behaviours to avoid:

- Burping loudly in public
- Slurping food or chewing with your mouth open
- Asking adults their age unless you know them well

Many Canadian families wake up early (around 6:00–7:00 a.m.), eat dinner around 6:00 p.m., and go to bed between 10:00–11:00 p.m. Dinner is usually served at a set time, and being punctual is considered respectful.

Canadians value honesty and often communicate directly. Making eye contact while speaking is seen as a sign of sincerity. If you make a mistake, a quick apology and an effort to fix the situation are appreciated.

In public places, Canadians generally speak quietly. Loud conversations or phone calls may be considered disruptive.

Personal hygiene is also important in Canadian culture. Many people shower daily and brush their teeth regularly.



ADJUSTING TO LIFE ABROAD & WELL-BEING

Moving to a new country is an exciting experience, but it can also feel challenging at times. Adjusting to a new culture, language, school system, and daily routine takes time. The feelings you may experience during this transition are normal, temporary, and shared by many international students.

Support is always available through your homestay family, school staff, and the International Student Program team.

UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

“Culture shock” is a term often used to describe the confusing or uncomfortable feelings that can arise when living in a culture that is different from what you are used to. Communication styles, social expectations, and everyday routines may feel unfamiliar at first.

The good news is that cultural adjustment is temporary. Almost all students move through these feelings and go on to have a positive and rewarding experience in Victoria.

Many students experience adjustment in stages. Understanding these stages can help you recognize what you may be feeling and remind you that this process is normal.

COMMON STAGES OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

The Honeymoon Stage

This stage often occurs when you first arrive. Everything feels new and exciting, and you may feel curious, energetic, and eager to explore. This stage can last from a few days to several weeks.

The Distress Stage

As daily routines begin and the reality of living abroad sets in, cultural differences may start to feel more noticeable. Things that once seemed interesting may become frustrating.

You may feel confused, lonely, tired, homesick, or overwhelmed.

These feelings are normal and temporary. This stage can feel difficult, but it does not mean that your experience is failing or that these feelings will last.

The Recovery and Integration Stage

Over time, language challenges and cultural differences begin to feel easier. You develop routines, build confidence, and feel more comfortable at school, at home, and in the community. Many students find that this is when their experience becomes truly enjoyable and meaningful.

EVERYONE’S EXPERIENCE IS DIFFERENT

Not every student experiences each stage in the same way or in the same order. Some students may feel homesick immediately, while others adjust very quickly. The most important thing is to notice how you are feeling and to ask for support when you need it.

If you are struggling, reach out to your homestay coordinator, school counsellor, or another trusted adult. You are not expected to manage this experience on your own.





WELL-BEING SUPPORT

The International Student Program has a Health and Wellness Coordinator who supports students' overall well-being. You will meet the Health and Wellness Coordinator during orientation and can reach out to them if you need support during your stay.

Well-being includes emotional, physical, spiritual, and academic health. Taking care of each of these areas will help you feel more balanced and successful during your time in Canada.

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Adjusting to a new culture can sometimes feel overwhelming. Writing in a journal can help you process your thoughts and emotions and reflect on your experience over time. Talking with your homestay family, friends, or program staff can also help you feel supported.

If you are feeling stressed, anxious, or overwhelmed, please reach out to program staff or school staff for support.

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Eating regular, healthy meals and staying active are important for your physical health. If you have specific dietary needs or preferences, talk with your homestay family. Many families enjoy learning about students' home cultures through food.

Staying active through school gym classes, sports, or daily physical activity can also help improve your energy, mood, and sleep.

SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING

Taking time for reflection, quiet moments, or spiritual practice can be helpful during your stay. If you wish to attend a place of worship or connect with a spiritual community, your homestay family can help you find nearby options.

ACADEMIC WELL-BEING

Getting enough sleep is one of the most important ways to support your learning. Spending too much time on screens late at night can affect your sleep and concentration at school.

If you are struggling with homework, classes, or academic expectations, reach out to the international support teacher or school staff at your school. Support is available, and asking for help is encouraged.

**You are not alone!
Support is always
available if you need it.**

SAFETY, SUPPORT & EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Your safety and well-being are very important to us. While serious emergencies are rare, it is important to know whom to contact and what to do if a situation arises. This section outlines emergency contacts, after-hours guidance, and support resources.

We recommend bookmarking this section so it can be easily accessed if needed.

IF AN EMERGENCY OCCURS

If an emergency arises during travel or after arrival, please follow these steps:

1. **Contact your homestay family first.** They are your primary support and can often help resolve the situation quickly.
2. **If you are unable to reach your homestay family,** call the International Student Program emergency number below.

International Student Program Emergency Phone:

+1 (250) 208-0163

Please note: This number cannot receive text messages.

This number is for urgent situations only, such as:

- Travel disruptions or arrival issues
- Health or safety concerns outside regular office hours
- Situations where immediate guidance is needed

For life-threatening emergencies, always call 911 first.

WHO TO CONTACT FOR SUPPORT

The following staff members are part of the International Student Program support team. They work together to support students at school, at home, and in the community.

Laura Schwertfeger

Principal

lschwertfeger@sd62.bc.ca

+1 (250) 508-7682

Amber O'Quinn

Vice Principal

aoquinn@sd62.bc.ca

+1 (250) 217-7430

Marnie Snobelen

Homestay Coordinator – Royal Bay / Dunsmuir

msnobelen@sd62.bc.ca

+1 (778) 350-6927

Christine Bollenbach

Homestay Coordinator – Belmont / Spencer /

Centre Mountain Lellum

cbollenbach@sd62.bc.ca

+1 (250) 888-2684

Robin Bayne

Homestay Coordinator – Edward Milne

Community School (EMCS)

rbayne@sd62.bc.ca

+1 (778) 679-6734

Kaia Gyorfi

Health and Wellness Coordinator

kgyorfi@sd62.bc.ca

+1 (250) 880-4262

General Office Support

sookeschools@sd62.bc.ca

Contact details for staff will be shared during orientation and provided separately for easy reference.

WHEN TO REACH OUT

You are encouraged to reach out for support if:

- You feel unsafe or unwell
- You are unsure what to do in a difficult situation
- You are experiencing emotional distress
- You need help communicating with your homestay family or school

Asking for help early is encouraged and supported.

AFTER-HOURS GUIDANCE

If an urgent situation occurs outside regular office hours and your homestay family is unavailable, use the International Student Program emergency phone number listed on page 19.

This ensures you can reach a staff member who can provide guidance and next steps.

A FINAL REMINDER

You are not expected to handle emergencies or difficult situations on your own. Support is always available, and there is always someone you can reach out to.

**Your safety matters.
Bookmark this page so you
can quickly find support if
needed.**



STUDENT PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

Please note: The expectations outlined below are part of the agreement you accepted when applying to the Sooke School District International Student Program. These guidelines help ensure a safe, respectful, and positive experience for all students, families, and staff.

As a student in the International Student Program, I agree to the following:

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

I agree that I will:

- Obey all laws of Canada.
- Not purchase or consume alcohol.
- Not purchase or consume cannabis or cannabis-related products.
- Not use, possess, or distribute drugs unless they are prescribed by a doctor, and not misuse prescription medication.
- Not smoke or vape on school property or on my homestay family's property.
- Not drive or attempt to purchase or operate a motorized vehicle.
- Not own, carry, or possess any weapons or items that may resemble a weapon.

HOMESTAY EXPECTATIONS

I agree that I will:

- Treat my homestay family members with respect and consideration.
- Act as a member of the family, which includes:
 - Voluntarily helping with reasonable household chores
 - Respecting household rules and expectations
 - Respecting curfew times
 - Respecting appropriate times for computer and internet use

- Keep my homestay family informed of my whereabouts at all times.
- Respect my homestay family's privacy.
- Obtain a Canadian cell phone number or an appropriate data plan for my international phone number to ensure reliable communication.

SCHOOL EXPECTATIONS

I agree that I will:

- Follow school rules and attend school regularly.
- Complete homework assignments and maintain a satisfactory level of academic effort and progress.
- Follow the School District Code of Conduct, including expectations related to respectful behaviour.

This includes refraining from any in-person or digital behaviour that is:

- Bullying, harassing, intimidating, retaliatory, discriminatory, or violent
- Disruptive to the learning or working environment of others
- Unsafe or illegal

TRAVEL EXPECTATIONS

I agree that I will:

- Obtain permission from the International Student Program office before travelling outside of the Greater Victoria area.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I understand that these expectations are in place to support my safety, well-being, and success while participating in the International Student Program. I agree to follow these guidelines throughout my stay.



WEBSITES, RESOURCES & QUICK LINKS

GOVERNMENT TRAVEL INFORMATION

Federal Government website related to travel and borders: travel.gc.ca/

SCHOOL WEBSITES

Belmont Secondary School
belmont.web.sd62.bc.ca

Edward Milne Community School
emcs.web.sd62.bc.ca

Royal Bay Secondary School
royalbay.web.sd62.bc.ca

Centre Mountain Lellum Middle School
centremountainlellum.web.sd62.bc.ca

Dunsmuir Middle School
dunsmuir.web.sd62.bc.ca

Journey Middle School
journey.web.sd62.bc.ca

Spencer Middle School
spencer.web.sd62.bc.ca

OTHER

Sooke Schools International Student Program
sookeschoolsvictoria.com

BC Regional Transit
bctransit.com/victoria

Victoria International Airport
yyj.ca

CONTACT



Sooke Schools
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM
Many Nations.  One Remarkable Experience

Sooke Schools International Student Program

200-814 Goldstream Avenue
Victoria, BC V9B 2X7

sookeschools@sd62.bc.ca
+1 (250) 474-9818
sookeschoolsvictoria.com

