

Gold Accreditation of:

UK2Learn

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The gold inspection report falls into the following sections:

1. About the Guardianship Organisation
2. Review of the quality standards
3. Lead Inspector Overview
4. Conclusion



About the Guardianship Organisation

UK2Learn is a family-run guardianship organisation established in 2006 by the current Managing Director and his late mother. The well-established staff team are highly experienced and fully committed to providing a family-oriented service to students studying away from home.

UK2Learn works with over 30 schools across the south of England and is based in Surrey with its Head Office in Godalming. As well as Gold, Silver, Bronze and University levels of guardianship services, which range from comprehensive support to emergency cover, UK2 Learn also provide educational immersion programmes for international students studying in the UK.

In addition to the 9 current homestay families based in the south of England, the Head Office also incorporates family-style accommodation with a resident Student Care Co-ordinator. This provides a useful, flexible base for students requiring accommodation, particularly at short notice or for short stays to facilitate travel arrangements. The organisation currently provides support and care for 65 children from around the world, including China, Hong Kong, Russia, Thailand and Spain.

UK2Learn has been in membership of AEGIS since 2010 and this is its second accreditation inspection at Gold Standard.

Review of the AEGIS Quality Standards

Standard One: Statement of company aims, principles and practice	Met
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The guardianship organisation has a clear statement of aims, principles and practice which is made available to all relevant parties. UK2Learn is successful in meeting their aims and practice.

Standard Two: Management of the Guardianship Organisation	Met
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Suitable safer recruitment procedures are in place, and checks are undertaken on staff and homestays. Clear job descriptions are provided as well as appropriate induction for all positions. Suitable contracts are in place for staff, homestays, and parents. These are signed and dated by both parties and a copy is retained by the guardianship organisation. Comprehensive handbooks have been produced for students, parents, and homestays.

UK2Learn has up-to-date professional indemnity, public and employer’s liability insurance in place that is sufficient to cover the scope of their business. A suitable system is in place to ensure that all homestays are aware of the need to inform their home and car insurers of the fact that they are hosting students. Record keeping is efficient, with all required documentation stored in a suitable manner. Suitable emergency procedures are in place. These include a 24-hour emergency contact number and emergency plan that outlines how UK2Learn will deal with reasonably foreseeable emergencies. Suitable arrangements are in place for any student who cannot be accommodated by their school due to illness, disciplinary action or any other cause.

Due regard is paid to protecting data and following the correct procedures for information sharing. This is outlined in the guardianship organisation’s Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice. UK2Learn is registered with the Information Commissioner’s Office and have appointed a data controller. Suitable consent is sought before using any photographs of students on their website or in any publicity material.

Suitable financial arrangements are in place to ensure that transactions are prompt in line with contractual agreements. Policies are reviewed at least annually, and all policies include a publication and review date.

Standard Three: Pre-Arrival Support	Met
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Prior to arrival, UK2Learn provides students and parents with information about their initial meeting and how they will meet their homestay or be taken to their school.

Standard Four: Student Induction	Met
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UK2Learn has a comprehensive student handbook that is written in appropriate language for the age of the reader. This includes important information on safeguarding and who to turn to should they have any concerns. Students are provided with a suitable induction on or shortly after their arrival in the UK. This includes spending time going through the student handbook to ensure that they understand the contents.

Standard Five: Travel Arrangements	Met
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Systems for organising student travel are efficient and suitably documented. Permissions for travel are sought and recorded. Any travel arrangements organised by the guardianship organisation are shared with the relevant parties. UK2Learn ensures that any taxi firms used are licenced and obtains confirmation that suitable safeguarding checks have been conducted

on the drivers who will provide transport to their students. The guardianship organisation ensures that laws for wearing seatbelts and use of car seats and booster seats where required are adhered to when students are transported.

Standard Six: Homestays	Met
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Comprehensive checks are undertaken on all members of the homestay household before placing any students in the accommodation. Full details are gathered on all homestay members, or members of staff and their families who are living onsite, either permanently resident or temporarily living away from home. A homestay profile is produced using this information to provide students and their parents with an insight into what life will be like whilst staying with the family or in the multiple student accommodation. Suitable checks are undertaken to ensure that student accommodation is provided in line with the AEGIS requirements. UK2Learn ensures that homestays and staff provide suitable meals, drinks, and snacks throughout their stay as well as suitable laundry facilities if students are resident for more than one night. Guidance is provided to homestays and staff on e-safety and internet provision. The guardianship organisation ensures that homestays, and staff are clear on the expected code of conduct when hosting students. Training is provided at least annually and includes a safeguarding update. Due consideration is given to health and safety requirements and checks are undertaken on the homestay accommodation before any student is placed within the household and thereafter on an annual basis. Health and safety checks on multiple student accommodation are undertaken regularly and at least once a year. These cover all the areas AEGIS requires. Comprehensive notes of the checks are recorded and stored appropriately. Homestays and staff members are made aware that they are expected to cooperate with an inspection that UK2Learn is subject to by AEGIS or any statutory body.

Standard Seven: Student Folder	Met
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The guardianship organisation maintains suitable student files that include all required information. These are stored securely, in line with data protection principles. Permission is obtained from parents to hold this information and pass it to homestays and schools as appropriate.

Standard Eight: Safeguarding, Child Protection and Welfare	Met
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UK2Learn has a suitable Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy that is shared with relevant parties and updated at least annually or more regularly as required. Students are provided with appropriate safeguarding information for their age. The guardianship organisation has a

Designated Safeguarding Lead and a deputy is scheduled for higher level training with AEGIS in the Autumn. The DSL has suitable training for the role that is reviewed every two years. Other members of staff, volunteers and homestays have received appropriate training for their role. This is renewed every three years. A suitable record of training is maintained. In-house update training is also provided regularly to ensure that homestays and staff are aware of the most up-to-date guidance.

UK2Learn has a suitable procedure for whistleblowing and reporting low level concerns. There is a suitable policy covering anti-radicalisation and the *Prevent Duty* as well as ones for anti-bullying including cyberbullying and e-safety. Procedures to follow in the event of a missing student meet the AEGIS requirements. Suitable guidelines are in place to cover the positive behaviour it expects from its students. These are tailored to the age of the students. Similarly, the guardianship organisation has an appropriate code of conduct that provides guidance on behaviour that it expects from all members of staff and homestays working within the organisation.

Standard Nine: Complaints	Met
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UK2Learn has a suitable policy that outlines the procedure for recording and responding to complaints in a timely manner. This covers an informal and formal resolution stage as well as a further stage for referring the matter to AEGIS if the complaint cannot be resolved by the guardianship organisation. Records are kept of any complaints, along with any action taken as a result of those complaints, regardless of whether they are upheld.

Standard Ten: Day students and Private Fostering	Met
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UK2Learn understands the legal requirements for private fostering and explains these to the school and homestay, liaising with them to ensure that the local authorities are informed of such an arrangement within the expected timescales. They adhere to the regulations regarding private fostering in place within their local area as directed by their local authority. Suitable records are kept of any correspondence with the local authority fostering team, with permissions secured to share such information as necessary with students, parents/agents, homestays and partner schools.

Standard Eleven: Liaison with Partner Schools	Met
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UK2Learn keeps in regular contact with the student's school in line with the requirements of the parents. They have fostered effective means of communication with the most suitable

person in the school, informing them whenever they are visiting the site. Schools are provided with an appropriate statement of service. UK2Learn liaises with the school where appropriate regarding travel and homestay arrangements.

Lead Inspector Overview

Founded in 2006 by the current Managing Director and his late mother, UK2Learn is a small family run guardianship organisation led by a very well-established and highly experienced staff team, all of whom are fully committed to providing individualised service to international students studying away from home. Their main priorities are to keep children safe first and happy a close second. Safeguarding is core and staff feel confident in giving beneficial advice to parents and students, always carefully explaining what is in a student's best interests. The size of the organisation enables all staff to know each student personally and a close-knit team ensures UK2Learn is responsive and can cope with all demands.

During the pandemic UK2Learn worked closely and flexibly with students, parents and schools to arrange travel, accommodation and to meet the relevant and often changing testing requirements for different countries. Staff recognise the significant contribution of the 9 current host families who have been very supportive and offered accommodation for extended periods of time during holidays and periods of quarantine. UK2Learn has access to an appropriate range of host family accommodation, suitable for students of different ages and needs. Head Office also incorporates family-style accommodation supervised by a resident Student Care Co-ordinator. This provides a useful, flexible base for student's requiring accommodation, particularly at short notice or for short stays to facilitate travel arrangements. Over the Christmas period, students were offered the choice of celebrating in a festive family experience, or if they preferred, to continue studying in a safe and supportive home environment. UK2Learn's ability to look after students in challenging circumstances has been recognised by the schools with which it works, a number of which commented that the organisation has been willing to go 'above and beyond'.

Although not currently offering hosting arrangements for day pupils, during the pandemic UK2Learn gained experience of meeting the demanding separate local authority requirements for private fostering as a small number of students resided with some host families for extended stays. The success of these arrangements for students and hosts means it is an aspect of future provision that may be explored further, as an addition to the current levels of service offered. Parents of younger students opt for the reassurance of the fully comprehensive Gold level of service. Silver, Bronze and University options are also available. All students receive regular contact and those subscribing to higher service levels receive very regular visits at school. Staff enjoy attending school events to provide support to students when their families cannot be there themselves and take pride in the achievements of the students, who they know very well.

UK2Learn quickly establishes open lines of communication with new students and their families through face to face or virtual meetings and via dedicated social media groups. This ensures everyone gets to know each other quickly and everyone can be kept well informed at all times. Students commented in the questionnaires that they are encouraged to ask questions and feel confident that they will receive a quick and helpful response. Parents are reassured that if travel arrangements change or children make special requests for time spent away from school that

they will receive a detailed appraisal of the advisability of those requests and any additional costs involved, so they can give informed permission.

As part of their pre-arrival preparation and induction students are given the opportunity to contact former students attending their school and to make friends with other new students in a constructive social media forum that is monitored by a Student Co-ordinator. UK2Learn staff are pro-active in communicating with students throughout their homestay visits and are adept at asking the right questions to ensure that older, potentially less-communicative students, are enjoying their experience.

The organisation benefits from its own dedicated and experienced driver, another key member of the team, who at times is supported by a small number of carefully chosen and suitably checked taxi drivers. Students receive details of their driver, including a photograph, each time they travel. UK2Learn liaises closely with schools regarding transport but prefers to make its own arrangements, including transfers to and from airports, between schools and host families, or to assist with visits to the School Shop for example. Students say travel advice is very useful and all travel arrangements are well-organised.

Record keeping is meticulous and careful consideration given to the core principles of data protection. Any incident, accident or concern is followed up, action is recorded and all relevant parties are kept appropriately informed. The Managing Director has pro-actively sought ways to engage and build relationships with relevant local safeguarding partnership agencies.

All students say they feel safe when staying at their homestays. Host families are carefully selected through a robust recruitment procedure. It is essential that they share UK2Learn's values and put the safety and happiness of the students first. They are carefully matched with students and receive a Safe Care Plan detailing the interests and needs of students who stay with them. Hosts feel well-supported by the organisation and although many already have relevant pre-existing experience, they are provided with regular opportunities for online training. When possible, face to face meetings at Head Office also enable hosts to meet each other and share ideas. Hosts reported to the Supporting Inspector that they have been provided with guidance that would help them to identify and support a student who was feeling anxious or isolated. Hosts offer very comfortable and clean accommodation, and they praised the organisation for the range of activities it provides for students in holidays. All hosts say that UK2Learn is a highly professional organisation and in response to the questionnaire a host observed that the children they look after regard the staff team as extended family who always put a student's welfare first.

Parents and students are encouraged to give permission for photographs to be taken so that staff and hosts can send images home to show how they are spending their time with their host families. Parents appreciate the high levels of communication, which begins with the information and guidance received when they first join the guardianship programme. All parents responding to the AEGIS questionnaire would recommend UK2Learn to others and describe the organisation as very professional, one which anticipates the needs of the students, is responsive and dependable and passionate about the welfare of the children in their care. Guidance and reassurance about dealing with any bullying behaviour experienced by students

or their friends has now been added to the student and host handbooks, complementing the very useful guidance on cyberbullying and internet safety.

UK2Learn works with over 30 schools across the south of England. Regular and responsive communication with schools results in very positive working relationships. Schools commented that nothing is too much trouble and that students report they have a lovely time with their UK2Learn guardians. The UK2Learn staff team enjoy working with young people and are very successful in meeting their aim to provide a safe and happy environment for international students studying in the UK.

Lead Inspector: Sarah Williamson

Conclusion

The AEGIS Trustees are satisfied that UK2Learn meets the quality standards and have awarded AEGIS gold re-accreditation on 17th August 2021. Re-accreditation will be due in August 2025.

Points for consideration:

- Add a medical declaration for the primary carers in each host family to the application form [*Standard 2.1*]
- Add the right to work check that is carried out to the overview that is currently used to record other safer recruitment checks [*Standard 2.8.1*]
- Extend safer recruitment training to other members of the core staff team [*Standard 2.8.2*]
- Follow best practice advice to send an annual reminder to host families to notify the organisation of any changes to their initial self-declaration [*Standard 6.1.7 & 7.1.7a*]
- Obtain a medical declaration from the primary carer of any Homestays with large houses which may easily accommodate more than 4 students at any time [*MSA Standard 6.1.8a*]
- Add advice regarding UK adaptors for electrical devices to the student and host handbooks [*Appendix 1 and Standard 6.11*]
- Add guidance about the organisation's rules regarding the use of hair dye in multiple student accommodation [*Standard 8.7.12a*]
- Add specific advice and guidance to the staff code of conduct regarding transport of students [*Standard 8.9.2*]