



Home Office

2025 Spring Rules: Child Student Policy Changes – Safeguarding

7 May 2025

Introduction

From 29 May, changes will come into effect for Appendix Child Student of the Immigration Rules. You can find a copy of the statement of changes to the Immigration Rules and the explanatory memorandum, which were both laid in Parliament on 12 March, here:

[Statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 733, 12 March 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

The Child Student immigration route is for children between the ages 4 to 17 who wish to study at an independent school in the UK. A number of changes will be made to improve safeguarding on this route:

- Carers of international students for periods lasting less than 28 days (nominated guardians) will have to meet the same requirements as those for close relatives and private foster carers, including a requirement to provide a letter of undertaking.
- A new list of permitted living arrangement categories has been created. Applicants must specify which arrangement they will be entering into. The financial requirements section has also been updated to align with this new list.
- Caseworkers will also be given broader powers to refuse Child Student applications where the Child Student's carer in the UK has committed a relevant criminal offence, or they pose a safeguarding risk to the applicant once they are in the UK. This includes adults living with a nominated guardian.

In the student sponsor guidance, we will also be introducing an additional duty on Child Student sponsors, requiring them to make reasonable endeavours to collect information on travel arrangements for students with a nominated guardian. Sponsors will have to:

- keep records of when the child is arriving,
- record details of the person collecting the child,
- record where the child will be staying if they are not proceeding directly to school, and
- report to the relevant authority if the child does not enrol at school.

Please note: we recognise it won't always be possible to collect this information due to circumstances outside of the sponsor's control but sponsors should keep a record of their reasonable attempts to do so.

The Student Sponsor Duties guidance will be updated with further information on 29 May.

Q&A

Why are you making these changes?

These changes are designed to strengthen safeguarding measures on the route and ensure Child Students are placed into appropriate living arrangements.

What is a nominated guardian?

A nominated guardian will be defined in the immigration rules as:

A person aged 18 years old or over who is appointed by the Child Student's parent, legal guardian, or school as the Child Student's carer in the UK outside of term-time for less than 28 days and/or is the school's emergency contact in the UK for the Child Student.

This is not the same as:

- a private foster carer
- a close relative the Child Student is living with during term-time
- the Child Student's parent or legal guardian who has permission as a Parent of a Child Student

A Child Student may have more than one nominated guardian provided they both meet the requirements.

How is 28 days defined for the purposes of the definition of a nominated guardian?

28 continuous days.

What is the reason for only allowing nominated guardians that are British or settled in the UK?

On the Child Student route, close relatives and private foster carers have always been required to be either British or settled in the UK. The same will be required for nominated guardians to ensure stability in the UK for child students. This includes the named contact from the guardianship organisation where that is the information provided on the letter of undertaking.

What is a letter of undertaking?

This is a letter provided by the Child Student's intended carer in the UK which confirms they have agreed to undertake the care, as well as confirming details such as their address and contact number. The full list of details can be found in the statement of changes.

The Student and Child Student caseworker guidance will be updated with further information on 29 May.

Can a guardianship organisation be named as a guardian on the letter of undertaking?

Where a Child Student has an arrangement in place with a guardianship organisation and doesn't yet have the details of their homestay or carer, then details of that organisation and a named contact from that organisation can be provided instead.

In these scenarios, caseworkers may make further enquiries to ensure safeguarding requirements are met.

What needs to be included in a letter of undertaking?

We do not have a set format for the letter of undertaking, providing all of the following information is included:

- (a) the name, current address and contact details of the intended carer; and
- (b) the address where the intended carer and the Child Student will be living in the UK, if different from the intended carer's current address; and
- (c) confirmation that the accommodation offered to the Child Student is a private address, and not operated as a commercial enterprise, such as a hotel or a youth hostel; and
- (d) the nature of the relationship between the Child Student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) and the intended carer; and
- (e) confirmation that the intended carer agrees to the care arrangements for the Child Student; and
- (f) a list of any other people that the intended carer supports or has offered to support; and
- (g) where the Child Student will be cared for by a nominated guardian, details of the name, registered address and contact details of anyone regularly living with the nominated guardian; and
- (h) if the applicant is not boarding at a residential independent school and instead staying with a close relative or private foster carer, that the carer has at least £570 per month available to look after and accommodate the applicant, for each month of the course up to a maximum of 9 months; and
- (i) the intended carer's signature and date of the letter of undertaking.

This was designed to be completed by the intended carer of the child, however, where a guardianship organisation is used, details of the organisation should be provided in accordance with the requirements above and as many of the details of the intended carer that the organisation has at the time.

Information regarding other people the carer will support specifically relates to the actual carer not the guardianship organisation, so this will not be required where details of the guardianship organisation are provided in place of the intended carer.

Will sponsors be required to retain the letter of undertaking going forward?

Yes. The guidance relating to retaining documents will be updated on 29 May.

Do all child students need an emergency contact?

Child Students should have an emergency contact for their time in the UK, although this may be their school if they are not required to have a carer in the UK (e.g.16/17 and living independently).

For the purposes of the details needed for those that live with a nominated guardian, what will be considered as 'regularly' living with them?

An adult who resides at their property or stays at the household on a regular basis. This would include, for example, anyone whose primary home is elsewhere but spends a significant amount of time at the nominated guardian's home.

What are the permitted living arrangements?

The immigration rules set out the following living arrangements (however, please note the other acceptable arrangements in the answers to the questions below):

- Full boarding at a residential independent school during term time, and outside of term time living with a person who is a British Citizen or settled in the UK and either:
 - a nominated guardian (for a period of less than 28 days)
 - a private foster carer
 - a close relative
- Weekly boarding at a residential independent school during term time, and at weekends and outside of term time living with a person who is a British Citizen or settled in the UK and either:
 - a private foster carer
 - a close relative
- Flexi boarding at a residential independent school and also being cared for by a person who is a British Citizen or settled in the UK and either:
 - a private foster carer
 - a close relative

- Living with a private foster carer or close relative who is a British Citizen or settled in the UK
- Living with a parent or legal guardian who has permission as a Parent of a Child Student
- Aged 16 or 17 and living independently.

However, it is acceptable for students to stay with their parents in the UK outside of term-time (for example, if they are visiting the UK); return home; attend a study camp provided the parent has consented and the school has oversight of the arrangements; or stay in school provided the school is still open with staff members present. In these scenarios, a full-time boarding student may not need a nominated guardian, close relative, or private foster carer, if the school is fulfilling the role of an emergency contact. They would not be required to provide a letter of undertaking.

These permitted arrangements also do not prevent a student attending a school trip or staying with a friend for the weekend, if they have the consent of their parents.

Why are nominated guardians not permitted for weekly or flexi boarders?

We have noted the feedback on this point and will be allowing nominated guardians for weekly and flexi boarding students.

Child Students entering into one of these arrangements should choose the most relevant option on the living arrangements section of the application form. Where it asks 'who will you be living with when you are not at school?', the applicant should answer as following:

- if they are a weekly or flexi boarding student who may also reside with their parent who holds permission as a Parent of a Child Student, they should choose 'a close relative'
- if they are a weekly or flexi boarder who will have a nominated guardian, even when the guardian is not actually a close relative, they should choose 'a close relative' on the form

An application will not be refused where the applicant has chosen a different option on the forms, provided their letter of undertaking or parental consent letter confirms they meet one of the permitted living arrangements, including those listed above.

The Immigration Rules and the corresponding section on the forms will be updated later this year.

Are boardings students also able to stay with their parent - who has permission as a Parent of a Child Student for the student's sibling who is younger than 12 - when they are not staying at school?

Yes, this will be permitted.

Child Students entering into one of these arrangements should choose the most relevant option on the living arrangements section of the application form. Where it asks 'who will you be living with when you are not at school?', the applicant should answer as following:

- if they are a full-time boarding student who may also reside with their parent who holds permission as a Parent of a Child Student, they should choose 'I will not be living with anyone outside of school terms' and then explain in the text box available
- if they are a weekly or flexi boarding student who may also reside with their parent who holds permission as a Parent of a Child Student, they should choose 'a close relative'

An application will not be refused where the applicant has chosen a different option on the forms, provided their letter of undertaking or parental consent letter confirms they meet one of the permitted living arrangements, including those listed above.

The Immigration Rules and the corresponding section on the forms will be updated later this year.

Could a child who is registered with a school as a full boarder initially stay with a parent who is visiting the UK to help them integrate into boarding over the course of a few weeks?

Yes, we recognise that it can be beneficial for students to have the support of their parents for a short period as they integrate into UK culture.

Will there be a definition of weekly and flexi boarding in the published guidance?

Yes, the guidance will account for this, including the variations in the definition between different schools.

The relevant guidance will be published on 29 May.

What if the living arrangement changes once the child is in the UK?

Sponsors must ensure that any new arrangement meets UKVI requirements and that parental consent to the arrangement is held, as well as a new letter of undertaking where required. Sponsors will not have to inform UKVI of these changes. However, they must inform UKVI if they believe a student is in an arrangement that is not permitted and what steps have been taken to rectify this. We will continually review this process and it may be updated in due course.

Will child students already in the country or granted a visa be required to change their existing arrangements?

We encourage parents and schools to ensure existing child students are in appropriate living arrangements. However, these changes will only formally apply to students applying for a visa from 29 May 2025 onwards.

What will be considered a relevant criminal offence/how will you assess safeguarding risk?

An example of a relevant criminal offence is one in the UK or overseas for which the person has received a custodial sentence of 12 months or more. Caseworkers will also have the power to refuse applications where they are not satisfied there are appropriate care, living and, where applicable, guardianship arrangements in place for the applicant's safety whilst in the UK.

You can find further details of relevant criminal offences in the statement of changes. The Student and Child Student caseworker guidance will be updated with further information on 29 May.

Why are these changes being made at a later date than the rest of the student rules?

Amendments to our internal IT systems and the application forms were needed which meant more time was required.

The application forms will be updated on 29 May.

Will the sponsor need to provide details of the living arrangement on the CAS?

Sponsors will have to confirm the living arrangement category the Child will enter into in the UK.

The Student Sponsor Duties guidance and SMS CAS guide will be updated with further information on 29 May.

Why is the sponsor duty only required for children with a nominated guardian?

We believe sponsors should have more oversight of these arrangements as nominated guardians are not within local government's safeguarding remit in the way that private foster carers are.

What happens if the sponsor cannot obtain details of travel arrangements?

Sponsors should make reasonable efforts to obtain details of travel arrangements for those on the Child Student route with a nominated guardian. Where this is not possible, they should retain records of their endeavours to collect the information, and where it is necessary, report this to the relevant authority.

The Student Sponsor Duties guidance will be updated with further information on 29 May.

Are schools expected to monitor all travel arrangements for students, including those leaving the UK?

While we encourage all schools to ensure best practice, the sponsor guidance will only require sponsors to make reasonable endeavours to collect information on travel arrangements for students with a nominated guardian. This will be required for the child's travel from their home country to school and their departure from school.

Are schools expected to check that students are actually complying with their stated living arrangements outside of school hours?

Sponsoring schools should have sufficient oversight of their student's living arrangements to satisfy themselves that their students have appropriate care and accommodation in place and that these meet the UKVI requirements.

Will 16/17 year olds on the Child Student route have the same requirements and assessment of their application?

We recognise that there are a range of ways a Child Student may wish to live in the UK. If they are living independently, they may choose to have a nominated guardian they stay with for brief periods or as an emergency contact, but this is not mandatory. Where they choose not to, this won't be counted against their application, as independent living is permitted. Where this is the case, however, sponsoring schools should ensure they can provide sufficient support and oversight during the child's stay in the UK, including arranging contact information in case of an emergency outside of school.

Where the 16/17 year old has a carer in the UK, the carer may be deemed unsuitable if they have committed a relevant criminal offence, or they pose a safeguarding risk to the applicant once they are in the UK. The sponsor will also have the same duty on travel arrangements.

Do these changes apply to 16/17 year olds on the Student route?

All sponsors already have a duty to ensure, for those they sponsor under 18, there are suitable care arrangements in place for them in the UK, including for those on the Student route.

These new policy changes only affect those using the Child Student route, for which most students are too young to live independently. However, we will keep this under review.

Will caseworkers be given any instruction or discretion after 29 May to consider applications under the current rules if the application is not accompanied by a letter of undertaking?

No, the rules in place on 29 May will apply to all applications from that date onwards. The letter of undertaking, where required in an application, is an important document in ensuring child students are placed into appropriate living arrangements in the UK. However, it is only required for applicants that will have an intended carer (private foster carer, close relative, or nominated guardian) in the UK.