

Homestay Host Families

Strode College have always welcomed students from all over the world but in recent years we have seen an increase in the number of students from Asia; China and Hong Kong in particular. Most of these students do not have friends or family to stay with in the local area and are placed with Homestay host families by the College. Here, Charles, one of our international students and his host family have written about their experience.

"This is my second year living with the Hooker family. Every international student has lots of concerns about living with a new family before they come to England. I worried that I might not get along well with the new family members. I was also concerned about the food and the habits in my host family as there are lots of differences between Western countries and China.

However, I am really glad and lucky that I am living with such a nice and warm family. My new family members

are very friendly. We talk to each other everyday about different topics. We talk about my life in the College, the news and weather in the UK and Hong Kong. We watch television every night after our lovely dinner. I enjoy the time that we all sit together in front of the television and have a rest every night. I enjoy the roast dinner every Sunday. I think that's the best time in a week. I go to the church with them every Sunday morning. I am very pleased



that I am living with a Catholic family as I filled in this requirement on the College Homestay application form before I came to England.

Besides the life with my new family, I am also quite glad about the location of my house. I walk to school everyday and it just takes me 10 minutes.

There is a big garden at the back of house. I sometimes play football and badminton with the little girl in our family. We had a barbecue buffet in the garden last summer as well! From my point of view, staying with a lovely host family is as important as studying in a high quality school. I know that family members are part of my life and support. I am really pleased about that! I am sure that I will keep in contact with them when I leave Somerset in the future, maybe through the internet or letters. I am glad that I have become a Charles Hooker now!"

The Hooker Family Homestay host family

"We decided to become a host family after we were approached by Strode College, having been recommended to them by our parish priest.

Before Charles arrived, we were naturally apprehensive as we wanted our student to feel welcome and at home, and that process does take a little time to work through. In the event, Charles fitted in almost immediately - this made easier by our being frank with him about our house rules, and by clarifying with him what he wanted of us. For example, food likes and dislikes can be very important when a foreign student comes to stay. The settling-in process is also greatly eased by Strode's Student Support Team, who monitor the process very closely to ensure that small differences don't escalate to become a problem. Student

Support provide a daily phone link if necessary and are flexible in their expectations of host families - we like to attend Charles's parents' evening meetings as we feel that we are in loco parentis, and having met his mother when he first arrived, we wanted her to be reassured that we would care for her son as we would one of her own children.

Charles has taught us a lot about his culture and way of life at home: we have tasted food made to celebrate a range of Chinese holidays and festivals, and Charles has cooked traditional Chinese food for us on several occasions. In turn, we have tried to ensure that Charles experiences a range of traditional English fare; roast dinners remain his favourite.

Charles has become a real member of our family although, like our own children, he has a wide social group of his own. We are very flattered that he regards himself as Charles Hooker as well as Charles Tse and we will stay in touch when Charles returns to Hong Kong in June. We will miss him hugely."

If you think you may be interested in providing Homestay accommodation for one of our international students please take a look at our website www.strode-college.ac.uk and follow the international students link or telephone Annabel Mitchell, Accommodation & Welfare Officer, for an informal and no commitment chat on 01458844477 on Thursdays and Fridays. email amitchell@strode-college.ac.uk