



GENERAL ADVICE FOR RECEIVING YOUR FRENCH GUEST

The following is based on our experience over the years and is intended to help you to avoid or if necessary, to cope with the problems which are likely to occur, and to ensure that your French guest spends an enjoyable 2 weeks with you.

THE ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

The French students will arrive and depart at the times and places indicated on a separate sheet. Please take careful note of these and make every effort to be punctual. The Staffordshire Limousin Experience does not accept financial responsibility for the repatriation of a student who misses his transport home.

When they arrive, please be sure to pick up the correct suitcase. Check the label before departing. Considerable problems have been caused in the past by people taking the wrong one!

When you get home you may wish to allow the French guest to telephone home, but remember that France is one hour ahead of us. The number to dial is 00 33 for France, followed by their number minus the first zero.

One important point about the arrival. We are expecting a lot of students and there is a slight possibility that one or two of them will, at the last minute, be unable to travel. If this happens, it is doubtful whether there will be time to inform you before the group arrives. We hope that it will not happen but we would advise you to be prepared for this possibility.

WHAT TO DO WITH THEM

To make the visit a success it is worth having a well thought-out plan of campaign which can be modified to meet special contingencies. Home-sickness is a common minor problem and generally strikes early in the visit so it is advisable to have plenty of activities planned for the first couple of days. A quiet first day at home to recover from the journey may be a mistake.

You are not expected to go to extreme lengths to entertain them but it's fair to say that most families will take him/her out somewhere. In some cases it may not be possible for the parents to do this, in which case we would advise you to arrange that the children go out occasionally on their own to the swimming baths, cinema, shopping etc. If the French child spends most of the time in the house, he/she may become unhappy and problems may ensue. In previous years family visits have been made to such places as Stratford-on-Avon, Warwick Castle, the Gladstone Museum, Tatton Park, Ironbridge and Drayton Manor. Also, by personal contact, it may be possible to arrange a visit to places of interest off the usual tourist trail!

Please note that it is a condition of the Exchange that the host family should bear the cost of all outings, entertainments, bus fares, etc. The same will be done for your child whilst in France.

However, taking them out may well be the easy part of the exercise - what to do with them at home may be harder so here are a few hints and tips:

- a) Not too much television. Their English may not be good enough to understand it and they will soon become bored.
- b) Find some suitable games to play which do not require the use of complicated language. Games you used to play when you were young will probably be suitable. "Guess Who" and "Happy Families" are good examples.
- c) Involve them in ordinary activities around the house in which verbal instructions can be demonstrated e.g. cooking, gardening, shopping, etc.

Remember that most of them will not speak English well so try to provide them with the opportunity of using what little language they have. This will give them great satisfaction and may well avoid problems for you.

We have arranged a visit to Alton Towers and details are attached. However, we would like to put in a cautionary word at this stage. The group visit sometimes causes problems, and we are warning you now in the hope that these problems may be seen in a less serious light. When the French get together after having spent time in an English home the following may happen:

1. They will immediately seek out their French friends, and, in some cases spend most of the day with them.
2. They will 'compare notes' which may result in feelings being expressed which have hitherto not been mentioned.
3. They may talk about their English partners, who, mistakenly, think they are being made fun of.
4. In the days that follow they may ask to visit their friends.

We think it only fair to point out that the problems we experience during this half of the Exchange are not always caused by our visitors. A big responsibility for the success of your guest's visit lies with the English student. So here is some advice for you.

It is hard work entertaining a foreign guest, particularly a student whose natural shyness and poor English makes communication difficult, but you must make the effort at all times to involve your guest in all conversations and activities. You must not imagine that life can go on normally during these two weeks and that you can continue following your usual routine as if nothing had changed. Boy friends and girl friends must understand that most of your time and attention will be given to your guest.

We strongly advise that you do not spend a lot of time in groups - a mixed English/French group will naturally result in two separate nationality groups which is against the spirit of the Exchange and does not help in cementing a sound relationship between you and your guest; one French student with a group of English could lead to him/her being left out, or at least not feeling part of the group.

Please understand that we are not suggesting that you have no contact at all with your English friends because we know that this can play an important part of the experience. But the line between what may be beneficial and what may be leading to problems is a fine one and we wish you to be sensitive to the situation in order that the experience may be a happy one.

GOING ON HOLIDAY

If you wish to take your French guest away with you for a few days. These trips can add a lot to the experience but you must bear in mind that the French student will be away from the support provided by the accompanying French staff and so you must be confident that he/she is happy with the proposal. Please note the following requirements:

- a) You must fill in one of our holiday forms which you obtain from the Administrator. This provides an address or telephone number where you can be contacted and details of the proposed trip. It is also used to inform the French family and asks for their permission. Please return to the Administrator.
- b) You must be back in Staffordshire the day before the French are due to depart.
- c) The children must not be left anywhere overnight without adult supervision.

Finally, do not be afraid of allowing them some time to themselves. It is not necessary or desirable for you to 'entertain' them every minute of the day but do not leave them alone regularly or for long periods.

GOING TO SCHOOL

The visit of the French students includes some school days so here are a few words of advice. The French students will normally be expected to attend school with their partner, however they are unlikely to welcome a lot of time in school and indeed schools with large numbers of French visitors may experience some problems. It is therefore important that you try to minimise the problem by requesting an absence of one or two days for your son/daughter so that they can take part in some activity which you have organised. Headteachers are aware of the problem and we think you will find them sympathetic or even relieved. However your French guest may not stay at home without your permission and you should not give this unless there is a parent at home to look after him.

School Bus

Those families whose children travel to school by service bus are expected to pay the bus fare for their guest. Those who travel on a contract bus will need a bus-pass for their partner and SLE will arrange for one to be sent to your school **provided there are spare seats on the bus.** If your contract bus is full you will have to make alternative arrangements to get your partner to school.

School Meals

If your child normally stays for school dinner you are, of course, expected to make provision for your guest to eat at school as well. Please ensure they eat properly at school - a trip to the local 'chippy' for chips and a Coke is not really suitable for children who are used to a cooked meal at lunchtime. A wholesome packed lunch however, would be fine.

Other problems which have arisen in connection with school are homework and uniform. Permission not to do homework must be negotiated with your school, and on the question of uniform, ask your guest to wear clothes that conform to your school's code of dress.

Finally it is our Committee's desire that the visit by the French students to English schools should pass off with the minimum of disruption to the normal smooth running of the school. The Exchange can exist only with the co-operation of Headteachers and staff and you should do nothing which might undermine the good relations which exist between our Organisation and your school.

FOOD

You are not expected to go to a lot of trouble preparing elaborate meals for your guest. Remember that they will have to come to England to sample the English way of life, so offer them some typical English food. Most will take a few days to settle in and it should not surprise you or give you cause for concern if, at first, they do not eat much. Most will recover their appetite after a few days.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

We have been asked in the past whether, if you have choice, it is better to put the two children in the same room or not. The answer to this really depends on whether they get on with one another. Sharing a room has many advantages - it is friendlier, they will talk to each other more, it removes any uncertainty of when to get up and what to wear. However, if they don't get on well and your son/daughter asks for him/her to be moved to the spare room you clearly have a difficult decision to make. By moving him/her you may exacerbate an already strained relationship. So there is a case for putting your guest in the spare room, at least to begin with. Whichever way you look at it, the final decision rests with you.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

While the French students are guests in your home they are in your care and are therefore your responsibility. You should treat your guest as one of the family and apply the same standards of discipline and expect the same standards of behaviour.

Supervision

The question of supervision is a difficult one so I think families might welcome a few words of advice. It is fair to say that, generally speaking, French children are subject to a stricter up-bringing than their English counterpart. French parents exercise a greater degree of supervision over their children than we do and as a result French children are not allowed the amount of freedom that is common in this country.

Our advice then would be that it is quite in order to allow the students to go out unsupervised during the day, but if you allow them out in the evening an adult should escort them to wherever they are going and fetch them back. Going round the corner to a friend's home, for example, may not require adult supervision but, on the other hand, if they are going to the cinema or disco, we would suggest that they be accompanied. Clearly there is room for discretion in this matter.

One area that we would also advise supervision is in use of the internet. In all matters we are concerned not only with the safety and well being of the children, but also with the future of the Exchange Scheme. If French students return home with, possibly exaggerated, stories of unsupervised romps around the town at night, French parents may well refuse to allow their children to take part in future exchanges.

PROBLEMS

There are bound to be problems but we hope they will be few and we hope they won't be serious. However, if you do have a problem which you feel that you cannot deal with yourself, please do not hesitate to contact any of the French staff whose contact telephone numbers are attached. In this respect we would like to place great emphasis on the early notification of a problem.

We would rather know about a minor difficulty which we can probably deal with than wait until it becomes a major problem which may, by then, be difficult to resolve.

Understanding One Another

One common minor problem is that of the failure to communicate. English families often feel that their guest is not happy because they are quite uncommunicative. However, this is not generally the case and most French students will enjoy their stay even though they may not appear to be doing so, but if you are worried about this let us know.

Other problems may arise when the French student wants to do something of which the host parents disapprove, smoking indoors for instance or refusal to go to school. In our view the situation is quite clear, you are responsible for them, and therefore they must respect your wishes. If such a case arises you should tell the French student in simple direct English what is expected of them. In many cases the visitor may be completely unaware of the offence he/she is causing. You should call us if they ignore your wishes.

Illness

If the French student is ill during the visit you should arrange for him/her to see a doctor. Normally any doctor will treat people who are in temporary residence in their area; they will normally do this free of charge. However, they are under no obligation to do so and if your own doctor refuses you should contact us. You should also let us know if the child is suffering from anything other than a minor ailment or if the illness is likely to prevent him/her from returning with the Group.

We wish you an enjoyable and rewarding fortnight

www.staffordshire-limousin-experience.org.uk