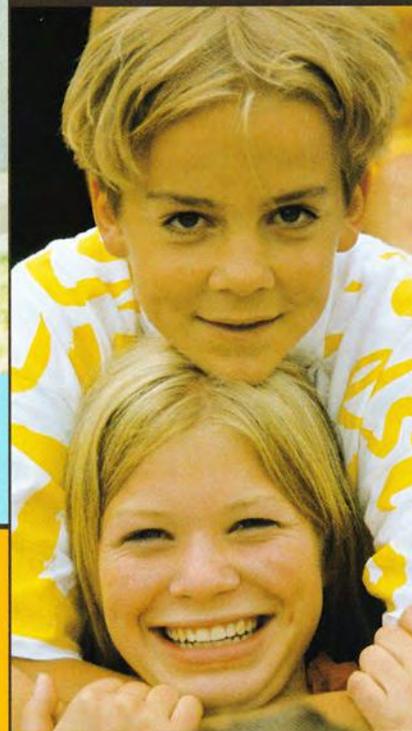


ENGLISH INTERNATIONALLY...



*“Amazing, brilliant,
a dream come true”*



www.vacstuds.com

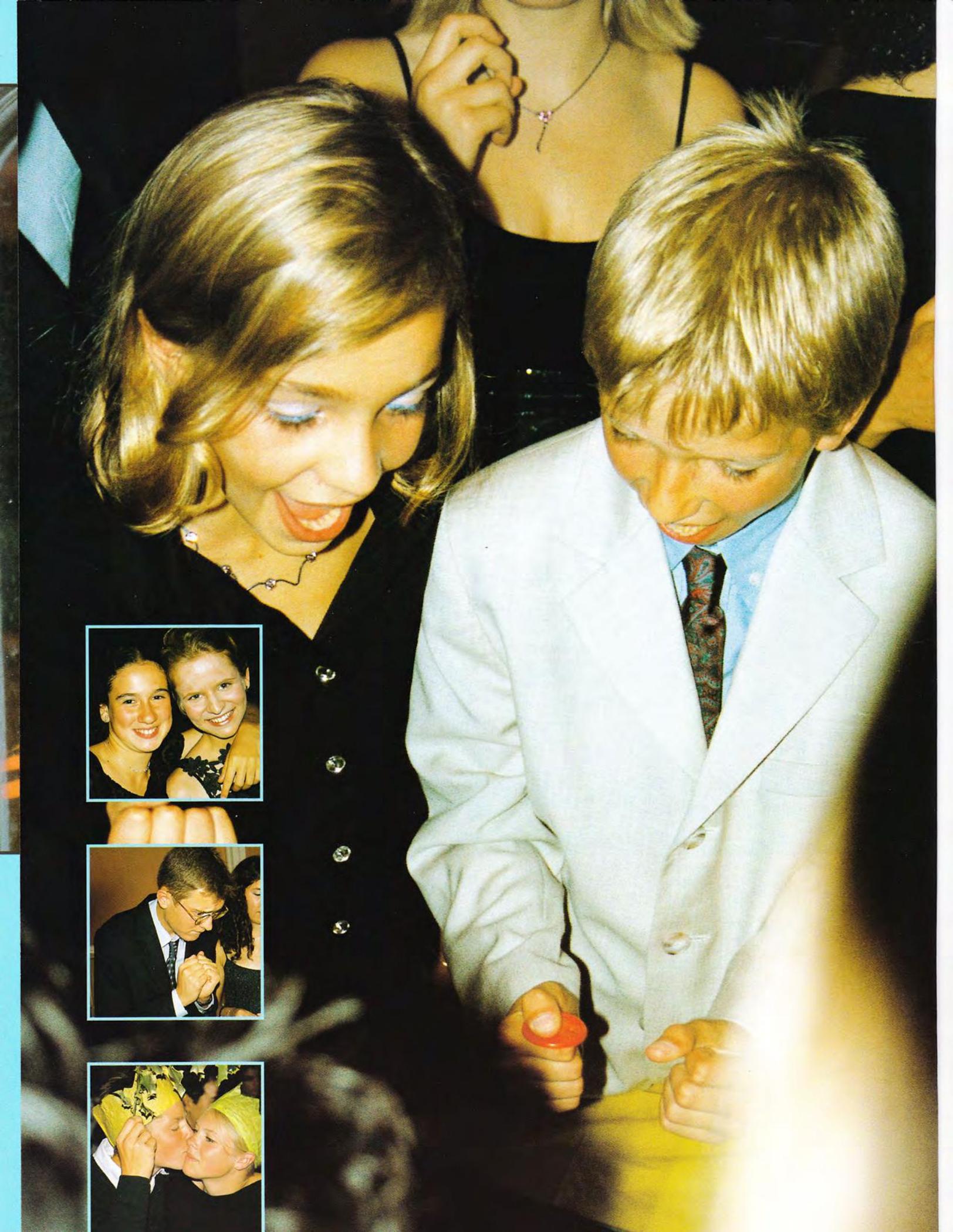
*Vacational
Studies*[®]

Summer

2001

**RESIDENTIAL
ENGLISH
LANGUAGE
COURSES**

11-17 YEARS



THE COURSES

RESIDENTIAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES

Vacational Studies Courses have been running for 28 years. We have tried in this time to develop an enjoyable balance between 'vacation' and 'study'. Here is our programme for Summer 2001.



WHAT WE TRY TO DO

Vacational Studies tries to create a totally international Course with students from as many different countries as possible. We avoid accepting a large number of students from any particular country. In this way we try to ensure that English is the main medium of communication among the students. By using English not just as a school subject, but as a living language, we hope our students will realise better its importance and value. When young people want to use English to make friends, this element of self-motivation greatly increases their fluency.

This emphasis on the practical use of English is combined with a full sports, entertainments and excursion programme helping young people to learn 'English internationally...'. But it is more than this...

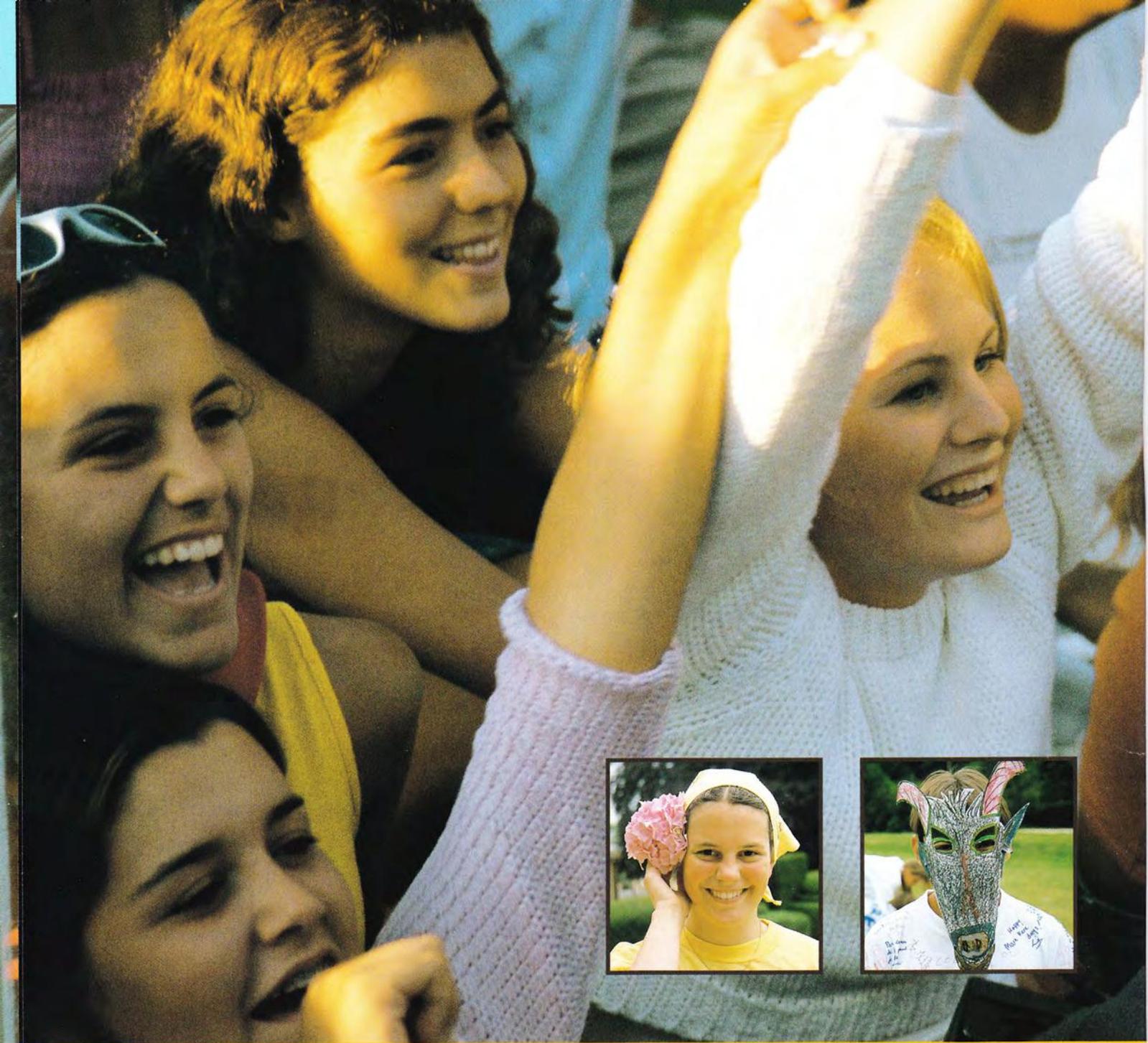
ACCREDITED BY THE BRITISH COUNCIL

Vacational Studies is 'Accredited by the British Council' and is a member of ARELS (The Association of Recognised English Language Services) – a professional body, membership of which is granted only after thorough inspection and re-inspections every three years. We were last inspected in 1999.



*the best vacation –
ever....*





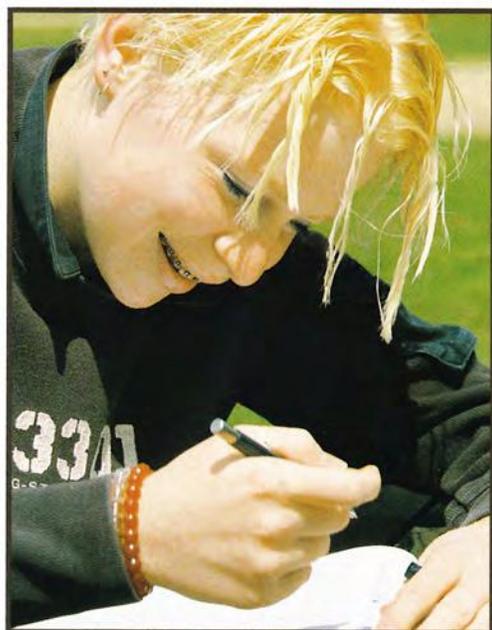
ABOUT THIS BROCHURE

This is an Information Book. The first section gives you a factual overview of the work we do, so you can decide if we are right for your child. The second part ('News 2000-2001') is written in a different style so you have an idea of my personality which necessarily influences the atmosphere on the Courses. It gives a more detailed rationale of the 2001 Courses and what has shaped them, so



fully informed and can prepare for the experience. If your application is accepted, both sections are essential reading. 'Unrealisable Expectations' in the second section deals with fundamental issues

THE COURSES



STUDENTS WHO WILL BENEFIT

Please make sure that our Course is suitable for your child and that he/she wants to come.

Those who will benefit and we enjoy having with us will be internationally-minded, interested in English, outgoing, gregarious and able to function independently. They will also be willing to accept the constraints of community living. We consider it so important that our standards and expectations are understood and accepted that we ask parents to confirm that they and their children have read the rules and that they agree to abide by them. A slip sent with the rules is provided for this purpose.

HOW THEY WILL BENEFIT

We hope that our students will learn a great deal of English, make good friendships and develop a positive international feeling. As well as formal study, we concentrate on the holiday aspect of the Course. While we try to involve students in all activities, we naturally respect the wishes of those who like to read quietly or be with friends. Over the years, we have built up an excellent reputation with parents and young people all over the world. Many boys and girls spend several summers with us renewing old friendships and making new ones. Most students come to us on personal recommendation. The numbers on the Courses are deliberately kept quite small so that the staff can get to know everybody and treat each child as an individual.

RESIDENCE

The Courses are all fully residential. Students eat, sleep and receive classes in the Schools.

THE STUDENTS

We accept boys and girls – near-beginners, intermediate and more advanced students – aged 11 to 17. As they cannot participate in an international community, complete beginners are not accepted.

The Courses are sports-orientated and encourage good social development in a community situation.

CHOICE OF COURSE

The Courses all have the same format. The only differences are location and dates. 2001 dates are:-

ELSTREE

10 July – 7 August 2001
(4 weeks)

CHEAM

12 July – 9 August 2001
(4 weeks)

MARY HARE

14 July – 11 August 2001
(4 weeks)



THE SCHOOLS

THE SCHOOLS AND SURROUNDINGS

For 2001 we have Courses at Schools near Newbury – The Mary Hare School, Cheam School and Elstree School. Newbury is a small country town in a pleasant part of southern England in the hills of the Berkshire Downs. It is 70km west of London and 45km south of Oxford. The Schools we use are among the best in the area.

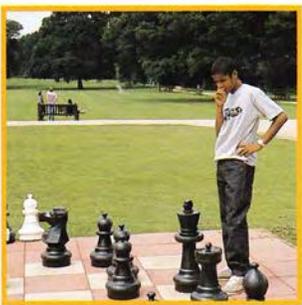
THE MARY HARE SCHOOL

The Mary Hare School is a campus comprising several buildings. Since 1982, we have used The Manor House and recently also Howard House. Various architectural styles are represented. There are formal gardens and woodland and extensive grounds which include several playing fields, a range of tennis courts, a gymnasium and a large indoor swimming pool.



CHEAM SCHOOL

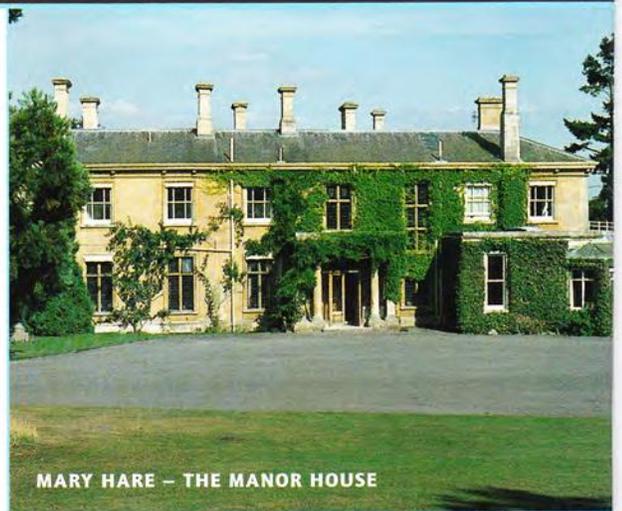
Cheam School is a late nineteenth century mansion. A particular feature is the sunken formal garden. The School's large grounds with playing fields, lawns and woods, back onto Watership Down. There is a recently built sports hall/gymnasium and a range of tennis courts. It has an open-air swimming pool.



ELSTREE SCHOOL

Elstree School is a large eighteenth century country house set in 40 acres of grounds with playing fields, gardens and woods which adjoin Douai Abbey. It has a gymnasium built in 2000. The dining room, kitchens and some dormitories were rebuilt in 1991. There is an open-air swimming pool and a range of tennis courts.

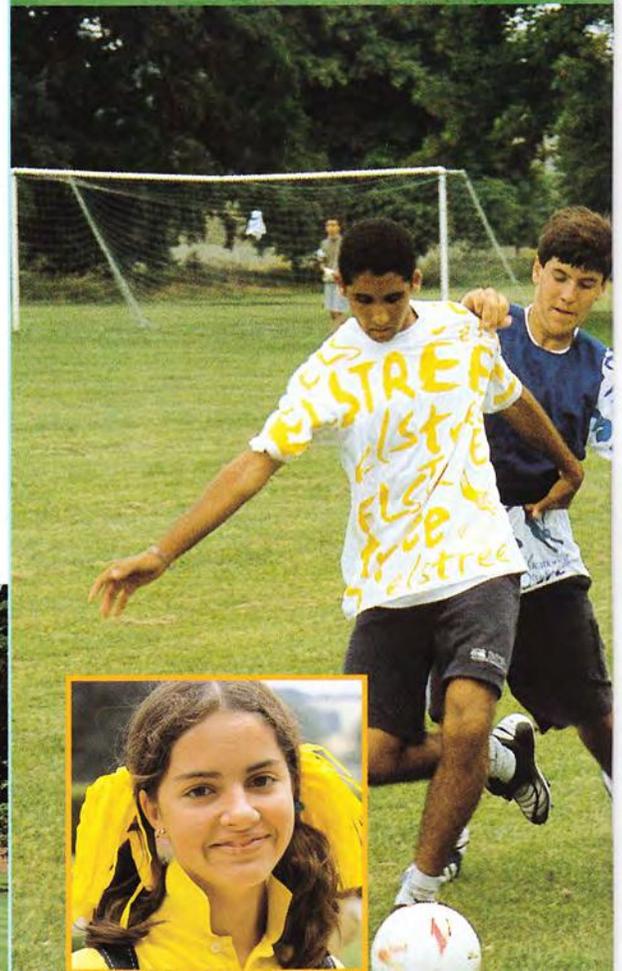
All the Schools have swimming pools, tennis, basketball and volleyball courts, football fields, sports hall, recreation rooms and colour TV/video.



MARY HARE – THE MANOR HOUSE



CHEAM



THE PROGRAMME



...this wonderful month of great happiness. The memory will stay with me forever.



THE TEACHING

A staff of qualified, professional teachers, experienced in the teaching of English, give 4 lessons, each of 45 minutes, every day except Sunday and excursion days. In addition, there is a 30 minute 'supervised study' period each afternoon. Classes are graded according to age and ability in English. Students are placed first in an 'assessment group' and complete a range of oral and written tasks, including a formal multiple-choice placement test. The combined results of these tasks together with the teacher's opinion eventually determine placement in a class. Class placements are constantly reviewed and students may be moved to more or less advanced classes, according to their performance. The teacher:student ratio is approximately 1:13.

Maximum class size is 16. We provide all books and teaching materials. Coursebooks include 'Over to You', 'Reward Intermediate', 'Cutting Edge', 'Matters' and 'Panorama 2'. Our teachers are encouraged to work with a wide range of lesson materials and to utilise newspaper and magazine articles, selected TV and radio excerpts, short stories, poems, songs and advertisements.

The emphasis in lessons is to help develop the students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills through a topic and task-based approach. This involves working with students on a variety of activities centred on a particular topic and helping them with the language needed to complete the activities. They will be expected to complete certain tasks. In this way, we aim to develop our students' confidence in using English to communicate what is important to them and to stimulate their interest in English as the world's common language. We try to give students materials and activities that are different from those in their own countries. Oral and written English are taught and there is an emphasis on conversation practice. A prize is awarded on each Course for academic excellence.

A Certificate of Attendance is sent at the end of the Course. This Certificate is accepted in some countries as justification for a state bursary. In Italy, the Ministry of Education has decreed that a Certificate issued by a British Council Accredited School counts towards the Italian School Leaving Certificate.





SPORTS

Sport is an important part of the Course. Our Sports/Social Organiser arranges a regular programme including football, basketball, volleyball, baseball, tennis, table-tennis, swimming, etc. Competitions run throughout the Course. There is also 'Sports Day' when all the Schools meet for friendly competitions in the major sports.

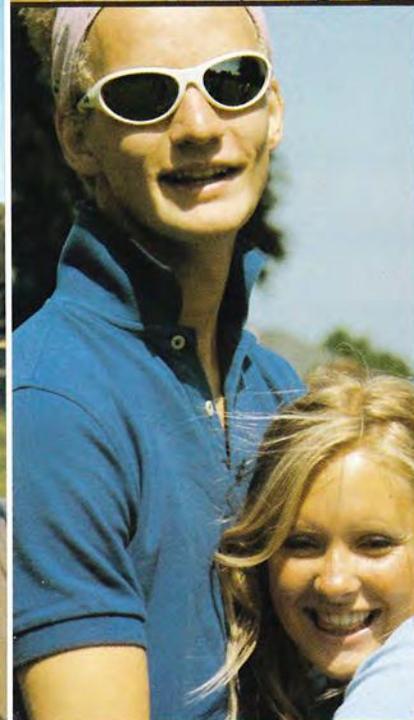
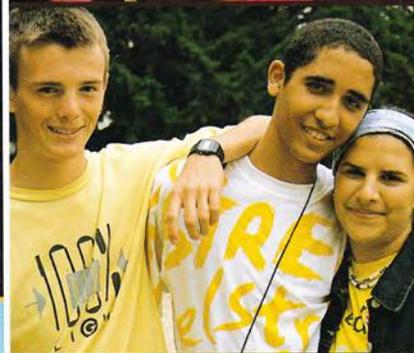
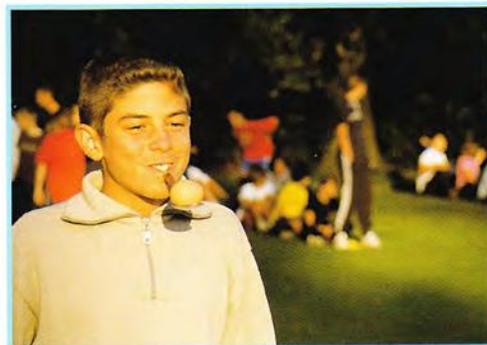
We take all practicable safety precautions - for example, students using the swimming pool are always supervised by a teacher.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

We try to create a relaxed and friendly 'family' atmosphere in which young people will feel 'at home' quickly and make good social contacts. There is a variety of activities on the programme - discotheques, films, barbecues, folk-singing, concerts, games, optional theatre visits, etc. The programme is a full one. There is always something to do and students are encouraged to participate.

EXCURSIONS

There are four days out. One is a visit to London for sightseeing; another is a visit to a designer outlet or similar for shopping; the destination for the third excursion will be Oxford, Southampton, Winchester or a similar city of historical importance; the fourth excursion is to 'Sports Day'. Travel and staff supervision on these excursions are included in the Course Fee.

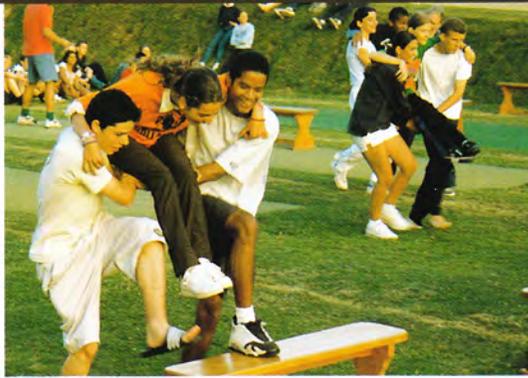


SHOPPING AFTERNOONS (OPTIONAL EXTRA)

In addition to the organised excursions above (which are included in the Course Fee), there are one or two optional shopping afternoons which are not included in the Course Fee. These are in Newbury or another town near the School. We think it safe for young people to shop in these towns unaccompanied by staff, if parents have indicated their agreement to this on the Application Form. This helps them achieve a measure of independence. Younger students can be accompanied by staff if parents or we so wish. There will be several staff in the town while our students are shopping. Travel is by private coach from the School with accompanying staff. The cost of transport (payable by students if they wish to go) is in the range from £3.00 to £4.00.

THEATRE VISITS (OPTIONAL EXTRA)

'The Lion King', 'Mamma Mia!' and 'Phantom of the Opera' - all these smash-hit West End musicals are booked out months in advance. Tickets for various shows have been requested and we will be allocated a limited number. We shall try to allocate tickets to students so that they can see at least one show of their choice. The cost of each (show + travel to the theatre) will be in the range £40-50. The cost should be added to pocket money. If it is not possible to provide a ticket, the money will be returned with the student at the end of the Course.



INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTS SHORT COURSES EXAMINATION (OPTIONAL EXTRA)

The Institute of Linguists has been recognised by the British Government as examiners since 1910. Specially for us, they have devised an Examination in Spoken English which will be externally marked by their examiners. This examination will be on 4 levels, according to the ability of the student. Level 1 is 'Near-Beginner'; Level 4 is 'Advanced'. At each level, the procedure will be:-
(1) a general conversation with the examiner during which the student is giving information and (2) a structured task in which the student is requesting information. Including preparation time, the examination will last about 20 minutes. It will be held in each school at the end of the Course. The Certificate in English as a Spoken Language for Short Courses is an officially validated qualification awarded in each level at one of three grades - Pass, Merit, Distinction. The cost is £35.00.

TENNIS LESSONS (OPTIONAL EXTRA)

Tennis may be played at any time, but we can arrange professional lessons, if required. These are available for beginners or near-beginners only. Six one-hour lessons are given in groups of no more than four students. These must be requested in advance on the Application Form. If tennis lessons are taken, a tennis racquet must be brought.

As these lessons are prearranged, it is not possible to refund the cost of lessons booked, but not taken. Parents are asked to make sure that lessons are really wanted before booking them. If tennis lessons are requested, the cost (£32) should be added to pocket money.

FOOD SAFETY

Vacational Studies policy is not to serve any food about which there is any concern for any reason. We serve only what we believe parents would feel safe to serve their own children in their homes.

A TYPICAL DAY

08.15	Breakfast
09.00	First class
09.45	Break
09.55	Second class
10.40	Break
11.10	Third class
11.55	Break
12.05	Fourth class
12.50	Break
13.00	Lunch
13.45	Supervised Study
14.15	Break
14.45	Organised sports and games
18.00	Evening meal
19.00	Games, films, etc.
21.00	Hot chocolate and biscuits
21.30	'Club'
22.30	Bedtime (or 22.45)

Pocket money and stamps are obtainable from the Office every day from 13.20 - 13.45 and 14.15 - 14.45.





HERE IS A TYPICAL MENU FOR GUIDANCE:-

BREAKFAST

- Choice of cereal
- Choice of various breads, meats, cheese
- Jam, marmalade, other spreads
- Tea, coffee, milk, fresh orange juice

LUNCH

- Choice of one cold or three hot dishes
- Buffet-style salad bar
- Choice of desserts
- Fresh fruit

DINNER

- Choice of one cold or three hot dishes
- Buffet-style salad bar
- Choice of desserts
- Fresh fruit

BEFORE BEDTIME

MEALS

Food is an important part of the Course. Meals are prepared by professional caterers to a high standard. Our specification for lunch and dinner is a choice of hot dishes (including one vegetarian) or a cold dish, a salad bar comprising about ten different items, a choice of desserts and fresh fruit. Students can have the first choice they want and can return for another choice as 'seconds'. If they cannot find anything they like, they can ask us to ask the caterer to prepare something special.

There is always a vegetarian option. Other special diets can be catered for. Cold orange juice or other drinks are available at no charge. There is a small 'sweet shop'.

At times throughout the Course, the menu will be varied to include, for example, barbecues (spare rib, sausage roll, jacket potatoes, coleslaw dip, crisps, ice-cream, etc.) There will be a traditional British 'Christmas Dinner' (roast turkey with stuffing, roast potatoes, Brussels sprouts, cranberry jelly). There may also be 'national meals'. If they

wish, students from various countries can advise the kitchen staff on how to prepare and serve a meal consisting of dishes from their own country.

There is a students' Food Committee which meets the Caterer regularly to discuss all aspects of the catering.

HOW WE ENCOURAGE THE USE OF ENGLISH

On each Course there are students from many different countries. We try to ensure a mixture of nationalities in classes and dormitories. We aim to stimulate the speaking of English socially in various ways. Members of staff constantly encourage English-speaking around the School. Our British students do so, too.

Another 'encouragement' to speak English is the 'English Only Prize' with a Vacational Studies watch for the winner. Points are awarded each week to students who have spoken English much more than their own language. Throughout the Course, there are also 'English Only' bonus days.

THE PROGRAMME



caught more than once using any language other than English on that day, an extra point is awarded - a 'bonus'. At the end of the Course the points are totalled and a name is recommended to the Director for consideration for the 'English Only Prize'. The more points, the greater the chance of winning the prize. We hope that the prize will be a positive inducement for students to use English.

HEALTH

Minor illnesses are treated by our own staff. There is a Matron in each School. We also use the services of doctors in the locality. The St John's Ambulance Service provides training for all our staff at the start of each Course in the latest methods of basic first aid and resuscitation. We ask parents to give us full health information on the Application Form. We request that children with food allergies come with a 1ml. Adrenalin (Epinephrine) 1:1000 injection pen - an 'EpiPen'. Children of European nationality should bring an E128 form available from their health service, entitling them as temporary residents to the same free treatment under the British National Health Service as British citizens for all, including pre-existing, conditions.

RELIGION

The Courses are interdenominational. If parents so wish, we shall arrange for students to attend an appropriate service. Please indicate this on the Application Form. Transportation to and from the church is payable by students.

RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION

At all Schools, students sleep in dormitories. Girls are in one part of the house, boys are in another.

INSURANCE

Every student is covered by a special Insurance Policy while they are with us. Details are on the enclosed information sheet. Briefly, the Insurance includes refund of full Course Fees if certified serious illness or accident to the student or parent during the month before the Course prevents attendance on the Course; private emergency medical treatment to the value of £10,000; personal possessions and luggage cover to the value of £500; personal money cover to the value of £200; return air fare or repatriation to the value of £10,000 if an APEX reservation is lost because of delayed or advanced departure through

There is no extra charge for this Insurance. Every student is automatically covered (subject to the stated conditions) when the application is accepted.

HOW WE LOOK AFTER STUDENTS

We understand the concern felt by parents when their sons and daughters are away from home. They are under constant supervision, as far as is practicable, both in the School and on excursions. Our total staff:student ratio of about 1:8 ensures that our students are well looked-after.

In addition to the staff, on each Course there are two older ex-students, 'Staff Helpers', to assist with the sports and entertainments programme. There is also at least one native English-speaking student.

During the Course, progress reports are sent to all parents describing performance in class and also social behaviour. At the end of the Course, all parents are sent a final report and leaving certificate together with a report from the Director on the student's general progress and behaviour.

IF THERE IS A PROBLEM

We shall contact you. Parents must ensure that we have a telephone number through which they can always be reached. If it is an emergency and we cannot reach you, we shall contact the person named in section 8 (our 'emergency contact') on the Application Form. If we cannot contact either of you, we shall assume your authority to act 'in loco parentis' and in a medical emergency, for example, give consent to appropriate medical treatment. We send students a list of rules and standards of behaviour expected before the Course begins. These are straightforward. Basically, we expect students to obey the law, respect the buildings, equipment and the feelings of other people and to show good manners. Students must read and know the rules before they come.

If a student is correctly motivated (see section on 'Students who will benefit'), there should be no discipline problems. If any should arise, we reserve the right to contact parents and, if we consider it necessary, require that the child be taken home at the parents' expense without refund of Fees. We also reserve the right to send the writer of the original 'letter of recommendation' a photocopy of any correspondence we enter into.

...an overwhelming experience which envelops one's life during those four hectic summer weeks.





HOW TO APPLY



HOW TO APPLY

Answer all the questions on the Application Form and return it to us with (if this is a first application) a letter of recommendation from the school on behaviour and attitude to study. Retain your copy for reference. We shall tell you immediately if the application is acceptable and for which Course.

A 'waiting list' operates when the Courses are full.

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

To ensure that all our students are well-motivated and keen to participate, we ask that a brief letter of recommendation from the school accompanies all applications from new students. This should mention behaviour and attitude to study. No such letter is needed for students we already know or, exceptionally, when this might cause conflict with educational authorities.

WHEN THE APPLICATION IS ACCEPTED

We shall write to inform you of this and include our Invoice for the Course Fees. The Invoice can be settled in full immediately, or 50% can be paid immediately and the balance by the date shown on the Invoice. The place is confirmed when the full Course Fees have been received by us. We shall also request travel details.

HOW TO PAY

Please see the 'Course Fees 2001' slip.

POCKET MONEY

Pocket money can either be brought by students (as a £ Eurocheque under £700 in value, or as a £ cheque drawn on a British bank, payable to 'Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C') or sent in advance to the National Westminster Bank, 30 Market Place, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 5AJ for Vacational Studies Pocket Money A/C 65400100. We also have a Girobank account for personal money. The number is 255 7444. Students will tend to bring about £250. Optional tennis coaching fees and the cost of theatre visit(s) should be added (if applicable). Do not send more money during the Course.

CLOTHES AND POSSESSIONS

Notes and advice on what to bring and other information will be sent to parents and students in advance.

THE COURSE FEE INCLUDES:-

- residence at the School
- travel Heathrow-School/ School-Heathrow¹
- all meals²
- tuition
- the sports programme
- the use of facilities
- excursions³
- insurance⁴
- the laundering of clothes⁵

¹ At specified times and terminals – see 'Travel'

² Except lunch on excursions, but including lunch on Sports Day

³ Travel and supervision, not entrance fees

⁴ As described in the 'Insurance' slip

⁵ If not sensitive to bulk washing/drying and at your own risk

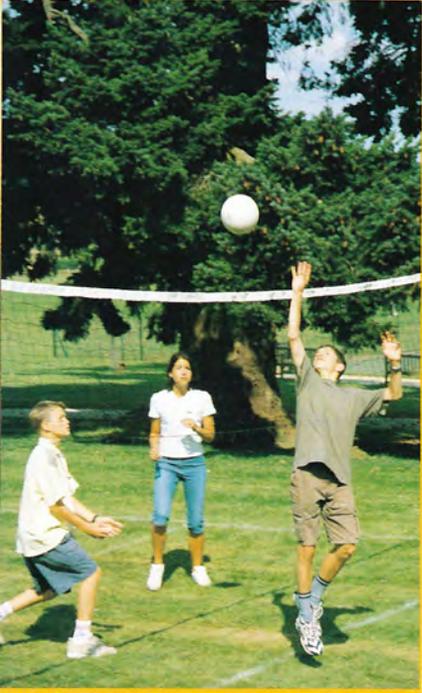
There are NO EXTRA CHARGES except for optional church, theatre or shopping visits and professional tennis lessons. A small (£3) deduction is made from pocket money to provide indoor board games and records, tapes and CDs for the 'Club'. £20 'caution money' will be retained in the student's pocket money account until the last day when it will be returned less deductions for damages (if any.)



THE COURSE FEE DOES NOT INCLUDE

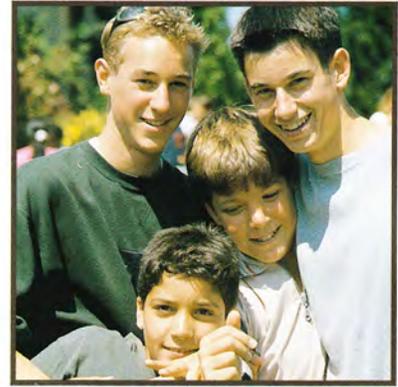
- pocket money
- optional church/theatre/shopping visits
- travel to and from England





TRAVEL

It is quite usual for our students to fly alone. 90% of our students arrive and depart in this way. There are many cut-price air ticket offers - for early booking, for young people, or for travel on particular flights. We operate a collection and return transport service between Heathrow Airport and the Schools on arrival and departure at no charge, subject to the conditions on our 'Travel Details' form. Our staff can meet students arriving at Heathrow Terminals 1 and 2 (only) and check-in students on outgoing flights from Heathrow Terminals 1 and 2 (only) on the stated dates. Our staff are at Heathrow from 12.00-16.00 on arrival days and from 09.30-13.00 on departure days. If flights arrive earlier than 12.00, students wait for our staff near the Information Desk. If flights leave after 13.00, we explain the procedure and take students to wait in the correct area.



For young children (under 12), airlines operate an 'Unaccompanied Young Persons (UYP)' or 'Unaccompanied Minors (UM)' service on request and look after them. As airlines insist on a named person meeting and returning a child and that the person remains until the flight has departed, parents should note that if they request UYP or UM service, all UYP or UM arrivals and departures must be by taxi at cost. The driver is known to us and has been working with us for many years. He will meet students and check them in personally. It is normally unnecessary for students to be booked to fly UYP or UM. Airlines (especially British Airways) are very helpful with young passengers at any age.

Our free standard service cannot be used when arrival is later or departure is earlier than our

stated dates or times, or if the flight is via Gatwick Airport, or if a student is booked UYP or UM, or is on a flight which arrives at or departs from Terminal 3 or 4, or is outside our requested times. We can make special taxi or minibus arrangements on your behalf. We do not charge for making these arrangements, but the cost of the taxi or minibus is payable by the student. (As a guide, a one-way taxi for one person to Heathrow is about £65 and to Gatwick about £85. For two people, the cost is shared). Special requirements should be indicated on the Application Form and details sent separately.

AT THE AIRPORT

Before travelling, we send an identity badge and luggage tags to ensure quick recognition. Our representatives will carry blue Vacation Studies' folders and will meet students at the entrance to the Arrivals Hall after leaving the Customs Hall.

If you do not take our standard collection/return service, but we make other arrangements for you, the same procedure applies.

VISITS TO THE SCHOOLS

Visits to the Schools outside the Course dates may be made only by appointment through our Newbury Office.



IF YOU COME BY CAR

Road directions are given after the Schools' addresses. Parents bringing students are asked to arrive at between 12.30 and 14.30. Parents collecting students on the last day are asked to arrive before 11.00.

ON ARRIVAL AT THE SCHOOL

All money is handed in at the Office for safe keeping. Students can withdraw money every day. We keep passports and tickets safely. We cannot accept responsibility for pocket money or valuables not handed to us.

ON THE FIRST DAY

On request, students will be allocated to a returning student who will act as a guide, explaining the layout of the building, the way the Course runs and answering any questions.

SCHOOLS' ADDRESSES AND DIRECTIONS

ELSTREE SCHOOL

From London, follow M4 to Exit 12 (Theale). Leave M4 and follow signs 'A4 Newbury' for 9km to Woolhampton. In Woolhampton, turn right after Falmouth Arms at the 'Upper Woolhampton/Douai School' signpost. Elstree School is 1km along this road on the right.

Address for students' letters:

Elstree School

Woolhampton Reading RG7 5TD.

Telephone (to contact Course Manager):

National: (0118) 971 2725

International: +44 118 9 71 2725

THE MARY HARE SCHOOL

From London, follow M4 to Exit 13 (Newbury). Leave M4 and follow signs 'A34 Newbury'. After 1km take slip-road on left signposted 'Curridge/Winterbourne/Donnington', then left signposted 'Mary Hare'. The Mary Hare School is first on the right.

Address for students' letters:

The Mary Hare School

Newbury Berkshire RG16 9BQ.

Telephone (to contact Course Manager):

National: (01635) 244231

International: +44 1635 244231

CHEAM SCHOOL

From Newbury, take the A339 road (signposted 'Basingstoke') for 10km. Cheam School (Front Entrance) is signposted on the right.

Address for students' letters:

Cheam School

Headley Newbury Berkshire RG19 8LD.

Telephone (to contact Course Manager):

National: (01635) 268803

International: +44 1635 268803

The telephone numbers and addresses given above are only for use during the Courses and only the Course Manager can be obtained on them. During the rest of the year, please use our Newbury Office address and telephone numbers below.

DIRECTIONS BY RAIL

By train from London, leave from Paddington Station. For Mary Hare and Cheam, arrive at Newbury Station. For Elstree arrive at Reading Station or Midgham Station. There are normally taxis at Newbury Station. If not, there are taxi numbers in the phone box near the Station. There are always taxis at Reading Station. There are no taxis at Midgham Station. Walk to A4 road, then follow road directions.

FINALLY...

We have tried to describe the Courses fully and frankly. Please also see the section 'Unrealisable Expectations' in the News Section. The News Section (enclosed) contains more detailed information on various aspects of the Course. It is essential reading for the parents of 2001 Course participants and is not only a résumé of the previous summer. We hope this brochure contains all the information you need to make your choice. Any further details you may require can be obtained from the parents of our past students and past students themselves (the addresses of some of these are on the enclosed list) and the Director. We suggest you contact our 'parental references' as they may offer useful advice.

Our Courses are designed with the benefit of years of experience and we are confident that we can combine the learning of good written and spoken English with an unforgettable and enjoyable holiday.





Vacational Studies®

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farmed sources

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Written by IGM

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Ian Mucklejohn - who, as the Director,
co-ordinates the Schools - was born in London.
He is a graduate of the University of London with
an Honours Degree in English Language and
Literature, is an Associate of the College of
Preceptors and a Fellow of the Royal Society of
Arts. He has had many years experience in
teaching. He is the founder of Vacational Studies.

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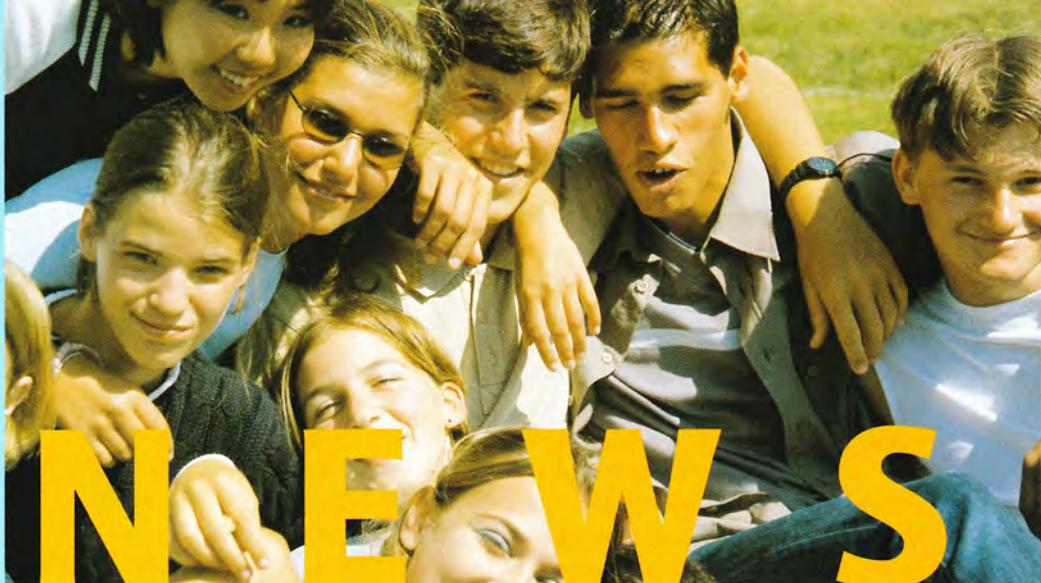
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Vacational
Studies®



2000 - 2001



'The experience I gained that month at Vacational Studies can not only be called life-enhancing, but was indeed simply a dream come true' (a Dutch staff helper); 'I will always consider the magic of the Courses at Vacational Studies to come from the people involved, with the locations and settings of the schools adding to the experience. I consider myself to be truly lucky to have taken this opportunity' (a British former student now staff); 'She was absolutely delighted with her stay. She told me it was the best vacation she ever had and she would have loved to stay another month if it had been possible' (a French parent); 'I would like to thank you for all your efforts for a wonderful hospitality of the children. I must admit that in the first place he didn't like to travel for so long time but after his arrival to the summer school he forgot even to call home. It was a very useful and enjoyable staying with the other nationalities and knowing a different cultures' (an Israeli parent); 'I really don't have any words to describe how nice it was to be there. I really appreciated it a lot, and if I have to enumerate the reasons I would never finish. But some of the best things were the great friends that I made - I have been already contacting them by mail - how much I improved my English, the experiences I had, etc... Actually, before going I didn't think that I would have such a good time. I think that the all the staff and all the teachers were brilliant. I'll never forget this. It has been one of the best months of my life' (an Argentine student); 'I had a wonderful time working in a team like that. It is a beautiful school with a good atmosphere' (another Dutch staff helper); 'To see so many different characters, ages and nationalities coming together as strangers but leaving with tears in their eyes after such a short period... is magical' (a member of staff); 'It was my best summer' (a Spanish student); 'She returned home full of joy and enthusiasm. Thank you very much' (a Norwegian parent); 'She was so pleased with her stay that she was ready to return the following day. My husband and I were indeed very pleased with her academic and social achievements. A large number of new friends from several corners of the world seem to be in constant contact' (a Norwegian parent) and (to misquote Dr Johnson's words on London in 1777) 'If a man is tired of Vacational Studies he is tired of life' (a Course Tutor.) The above comments are just a few of many. As always,

So what was special about VacStuds 2000? Read on.

The dull drizzle and grey cloud that greeted our first students as they arrived for our first Course, did not last. Pleasant blue skies, agreeable temperatures and an absence of rain prevailed until the middle of August. So rare was rain, in fact, that when it came for a day or two, students were out dancing in it.

With so many older, experienced students and with Course Manager, David Johnson, in his seventh year in the job and his thirteenth year with us, Elstree should have run like a dream. Returning teachers Sara Evans (also ACM), Peter Blood and Julie Pugh were in their fifth year. Anna Eames and Joanne Fox-Mills were in their third. Charles Dussé was back after a summer at Douai as Course Tutor. James McCrory and Gemma Hindson made their debuts this year. It was a strong team of teachers. Their talents were not confined to the classroom. They were out and about on the sportsfield and in the social events on a regular basis. It was just as well they were. Sports/Social Organiser, Ed Hooper, received personal news that caused his departure after a week. His replacement was Jamie Metcalfe, a first-time assistant from Mary Hare, who joined newcomer Assistants Beth Tricker and Luke Hill. Strong Staff Helpers, Manuela Magliulo (Italy) and Andrés Arnaldos (Spain), knew just how the Course should run, but were largely left to their own devices. It is thanks to Manuela that the Spectacular ran so well and to Andrés's input that many of the sports happened at all. Matron, Bettina Watson, ran the domestic side so smoothly that we never noticed all the compromises that have to be made in converting a building from prep school to summer camp. Those who did not know

the VacStuds tradition may not have been aware, but those who did certainly realised, that this year's Course was different. We had a liberal approach from a Course Manager in what must be a swansong appearance and a crew that expected events simply to happen. But it was the combination of these factors with some older and returning students who were more clandestinely self-centred than any I can remember that resulted in a denouement that was entirely predictable and which has permanently excluded several potential Staff Helpers and many others from ever having contact with us again. There will be changes to ensure that Elstree 2001 runs along the traditional VacStuds lines that have ensured happy students and fulfilling experiences there every year since 1978.

Francis McIvor, now in his fifteenth year with us, was in charge at Cheam. He remarked at the final dinner how much he had enjoyed it. The chemistry was just right with a group of mainly well-intentioned young people and a motivated staff. Sabine Dyster, back for her third year, was Matron and Francis's ACM. Sore throats there were a-plenty, but Sabine's no-nonsense approach prevailed and students just 'got on with it'. The excellent and organised Pierre Gerrard returned for a fourth year, this time as Course Tutor. Among the teachers, the reliable Steve Sugden was back for his fifth year. The very special Carolyn Godfrey was back for her second. The others were new - Christian Spencer (whose basketball refereeing was so accomplished that we even restored this game to the Sports Day programme); Sophie Alder (whose yoga class provided some of the most static film I have shot); Shirley Ashbridge (with strengths in the classroom and on the field) and Daniel Gleghorn (with similarly ubiquitous strengths and grotesque appearances in 'Miss Cheam' and 'Blind Date'.) They may have been new, but they adjusted to the Course immediately and joined in brilliantly. Sports/Social Organiser, Rick Martineau, was brand new to VacStuds, but it was as if he had always been there. A 'natural' with young people, he was simply superb in the role. His booming voice, huge hat and larger-than-life presence, enthused even the most quiescent student. Newcomer Assistant, Will Cole, had had experience of us as the 'UK Rep' in 1997. He adjusted smoothly to his staff status, treating our foreign guests to his blend of British humour and biting wit. Christelle Harkema became one of the paid staff after her apprenticeship as student and Staff Helper at Douai.



Energetic and animated, she made her mark on the Course. Staff Helper, Michael Touma (Syria) made his mark, too, although not always quite as intended. Fellow Staff Helper, Bianca Visser (Netherlands), loves everything about VacStuds and threw herself into the Course. Although we had assumed that Mary Hare would take over from Douai, its defining features were to be found at Cheam. Francis continued the Douai tradition of a play. 'Ernie's Incredible Illucinations' made another appearance. A fragment is preserved on the video. Fortunately, the raucous 'Derek Jacket' Douai tradition did not travel. With the exception of a poor attitude shown by some boys on the last night, Cheam 2000 was a vintage year.

Now in his twelfth year with us, I decided to give Richard Wijeratne Mary Hare to look after. It needed an experienced hand on the reins. After several years running Cheam with an office that was also open at most times to staff and students, Richard eschewed the cupboard at the rear of the School that had been our base for many a summer in favour of a palatial reception area at the front. That students could - and did - call in for a chat set the atmosphere for Mary Hare 2000. After being ACM at Cheam, Liz Morris came to Mary Hare in the same capacity for her seventh summer. Jane Allard was back, this time as Course Tutor, as was Philip Sams after biking round the world. Kerry Davies returned to advise and guide. Iona Bradley made her mark in her first year. Also new to VacStuds were Amanda Pym and Lewis Warburton. These newcomers, with Phil, surprised and delighted their students and colleagues with a tour de force Abba performance saved for posterity on video. A sports professional, Matthew Howlett took on the Sports/Social Organiser role, always more demanding at Mary Hare because Sports Day is held there. He took careful note of what had worked in the past and aimed to continue the positive traditions by making full use of his crew. Talented they were. Eagle-eyed, Sarah Jocelyn, had a great time, joining in with everything and using her beautiful singing voice to good effect. Wil Davies threw himself into his role as wandering minstrel, comic act, referee or whatever the situation demanded. Two splendid Staff Helpers, willing, reliable, hard-

working and dedicated, Diana Haltermann (Spain) and Frederik Vernède (Netherlands), completed the crew. Matron was Liz Thurlow. Supremely competent and efficient, Liz dispensed pink pills with a soothing hand. And there were the students. With the exception of a small group who seemed to have strayed into VacStuds by accident and never realised it was a multinational community, they were great. The returnees, by and large, were participatory and set the right example. 'Characters' abounded. Some were Staff Helpers in the making. Even the smallest of the new ones made a valid contribution. 2000 was a very good year for Mary Hare.

There are a few who, like me, have the privilege of seeing all the schools. One was our new Director of Studies, Katie Scott. After three years teaching and with the experience of having been a Course Tutor, Katie was well qualified for the post. With the help of Course Tutors, she ensured that lessons were observed, teachers were advised and standards were maintained. The academic side of the Courses ran smoothly. Any matters arising were expeditiously handled. Reports were well-written and pertinent. Her predecessor, Fred Gooch had been DoS for more than a decade. He left a strong legacy. Systems had been established, materials purchased and an excellent, task-based 'Programme of Work' had been written. Fred Gooch's involvement with VacStuds continues with a programme of teaching via the web that begins in early 2001.

Jonathan Hooper was the Support Teacher. Leather-clad on his motorbike, he was a distinctive sight at all the schools, and (to use Katie's favourite word) a 'wonderful' asset in all areas in and out of the classroom. Loyal to all the Courses, he switched from T-shirt to T-shirt at Sports Day.

Whereas, Jonathan Riggall was in green. An environmentally friendly young graduate, Jonathan was my PA for a fourth summer. No longer in the energy-consuming, air-conditioned luxury of the Mondeo, his cream Lada graced all the school drives, breaking down only when out of petrol. He fetched, carried, forgot and remembered without complaint. Off to Jamaica soon on an environmental project, he may be back.

LTA professional, Liz Fidler gave tennis coaching again for the twentieth summer. Discos were by Mark Thatcher. I know that both these important aspects of the Courses are safe in their capable hands.

And there was me, 'dues ex machina'-like or at least 'deus ex Audi', sometimes ensconced in A8, sometimes in A6, but always on the move from school to school in various guises depending on the circumstances. In the same hour, I can be wielding a camera, capturing a moment on video, discussing arcane pedagogic matters with staff, dealing with naughty youngsters and, in my capacity as ultimate deterrent, arranging a return flight for an expellee. It's a full life.

SPORTS DAY 2000

Generally I manage to choose the one bright day in the middle of dull ones. This year, Sports Day dawned grey and stayed that way. While the flat light made it not quite the 'photo opportunity' it generally is, the enthusiasm of the students was undiminished. The range of sports covered was extended to include basketball as we had a competent referee to control the passions this particular sport has engendered. So intense are the emotions that even grown ups will argue decisions. The chants endure from year to year. 'We all live in a yellow Elstree School', 'Might, mighty, mighty, MIGHTY Cheam!', 'We are from Mary, Mary, Mary Hare-air!' And for that moment, frozen in time, these young people from far-flung countries in the world, suddenly joined in loyalty to a school in west Berkshire, really mean it. Just for that instant, their school is the best. Nothing else matters. The nerve endings are very close to the surface. That there is a sense of fun amid the hysteria makes it acceptable, but the feelings are primal and the tribalism lurking beneath the spiky hairstyles, make-up and designer outfits is only too evident. For an hour or so in the middle of this mêlée, Mrs Monger's buffet lunch offers an oasis of calm, delicious savouries loaded on three tables - one for each school, then it's back again to the cheering and the rivalry, culminating in - the 'Spectaculars'. Many years ago, it struck me that there should be an activity that everyone can join in. For each school to put on a mass 'event' at Sports Day seemed to me a way to encourage everyone, no matter how small or unsporty, to have a go. That the common cause of preparing for the Spectacular can make a school gel during the first few days of the Course is so much the better. This year, we had Elstree performing a

mass salsa-type dance, choreographed by Manuela Magliulo. Cheam portrayed seasons and eras by using fashion parades and music from the periods. Mary Hare celebrated the various animals of the Chinese Years, culminating in a huge papier-mâché Year of the Dragon. Although all the Sports Organisers work together in arranging Sports Day, much of the burden falls on the host school. Mary Hare's Sports Organiser, blue-rinsed, be-capped Matthew Howlett, made sure all the elements fitted together, the teams and referees arrived for the right matches and everyone had a day to remember.

CATERING

Everyone sampled the delights of Mrs Jean Monger's catering at Mary Hare on Sports Day. At Cheam and Elstree, meals were provided by Sodexo (the new name for Gardner Merchant) with Roger Hammett in charge. Youngsters are notoriously conservative in their tastes and for them to accept a almost total change in their diet is expecting too much. All we can hope for is that they find something they do not completely dislike. The wide choice we specify should ensure this. On one or two occasions at Cheam, it was a choice between one type of pizza and another, but with the help of the Food Committee, this was sorted out and real choices were provided. I specified that all choices should be listed on a menu so everyone would know what they were eating. In view of some countries' cautions and the prevalence of allergies, all dishes containing food that may be controversial (such as beef) or allergens (such as nuts) are labelled. My own feeling is that our catering is, by and large, as good as we can reasonably be expected to get it. Each year, however, I see teenagers walk past all the choices and just pick at a piece of bread. Staff were alert to this. Where necessary, they introduced the student to the caterer so they could discuss what food should be provided

so that it would be eaten. Once again I asked the students to complete a 'Food Questionnaire' and have tabulated the results. The overall average satisfaction rates (combining 19 different questions on quality, quantity and variety of the various meals) are as follows:- Mary Hare 69%; Cheam 58%; Elstree 65%. Results are similar to last year's with Cheam and Elstree a little down. I request marks on a scale from 1 (bad) to 10 (good) and indicate that a 1 by 'choice' = there was no choice at all; that a 1 by 'quality' = the food was inedible and that a 1 by 'quantity' indicates there was no food at all. I discounted responses from those who answered that there was no food at all - and there were a few. As ever, many responses were highly subjective and some were bizarre (there was good choice, but no food at all, although this non-existent food was of good quality). The caterers have been given the forms and a breakdown of the results applying to the various aspects of the catering from breakfast to barbecues. They have been asked to take note of the comments. I can add that I ate only at the schools the entire summer and enjoyed almost every meal. As one (non-British!) student stated in the questionnaire:- 'The food was great. Even better than at home.' I concur.

WORKING FOR THE CATERERS

Former students and their friends who would like to earn money by working for Sodexo at Cheam or Elstree should contact me. I shall send them Roger Hammett's address. Several have already done so. The work is hard, but they had a great time.

THE FUN OF VACSTUDS

Over the years, the social programme has become far more sophisticated. So full is it that new Sports/Social Organisers cannot be aware of everything that returning students expect to see on the programme. Our SSO at Mary Hare for the last few years, David





is based around the experiences the students have on the Course. As before, the examiners commented on the very high standard of English generally and the enthusiasm with which the candidates talked about the Course. This examination is a real qualification from Government-approved examiners. It will be offered again in 2001.

VACSTUDS CERTIFICATES

The examination certificate is not the only valuable piece of paper our students have at the end of our Course. The final report and leaving certificate from a British Council Accredited School is now accepted by the Italian Education Ministry as counting towards the student's matriculation. Maybe where Italy has started, other countries will follow. In Monaco, a certificate issued by us will count towards a state bursary. There may be other grants that I am not aware of in other countries.

THE VALUE OF THE COURSE

I think the work we do and the experiences our young people have are of tremendous value. It is something I have been happy to devote my life to. It is now more than a generation since the Courses began. We are starting to have as students the children of those who were with us in the '70s. There have been some changes in attitude, in society and in technology which I should comment on in the following paragraphs:-

PARENTAL CONTROL CONDITION (NEW FOR 2001)

Most students keep (more or less) to the rules that they have signed their agreement to in the 'Agreement and Travel Details' form. We must assume that they will keep their word, otherwise we will become law enforcement officers rather than educators. Nevertheless, there are some students who will try to do what they want to do regardless of the consequences and without considering the effect it will have on the community. Let me give two examples. Our young people are aware that England is one of the few countries where identity cards do not exist. Goods that would be impossible for under 18s to buy in other countries are easily available here. So that we can keep a check on what students are bringing into the school, it has been customary for many years to have a check on the contents of shopping bags when students leave the bus from shopping trips. A number of students used the fact that this did not happen at Elstree to bring back

Wijeratne, kindly wrote down all the events and activities that worked (and how they worked) and those that have not (and why they have not) in a comprehensive 'Notes for Sports/Social Organisers'. I also make sure that a new SSO has a copy of the previous year's school video. Some of the events, like the Casino, Christmas Dinner and the 'Eurovision Song Contest' have endured for years and are integral to the Course. Others, like 'Man-O-Man' are recent introductions and just get better each year. Some, like 'Blind Date' are well past their prime and could usefully be discarded. The only 'Blind Date' I have seen that worked was this year, at Cheam, where male staff members cross-dressed as grotesques, female students voiced-over the answers and the poor male student contestant was flabbergasted when he found he had chosen the Course Manager. Inspired! Elstree has the great advantage of a proper stage and auditorium, so its 'Folies', 'Talent Show' and 'Eurovision' start at an advantage. Nevertheless, I was surprised to see how 'Eurovision' had changed. The time was that students would actually sing. This time, they just danced to music and occasionally mimed. Far too easy. Once again, Mary Hare's 'Folies' revealed some tremendous talent in singing, dancing and even stand-up comedy.

THE 'STUDIES' PART OF VACSTUDS

Just as we saw talents in the extra-curricular programme, so we saw some remarkable linguistic skills. English is undeniably the world language. It is everywhere. Anyone using the internet can see this. Our students use it everyday in our Forum and there are ICQ meetings regularly - all using non-stop English. Our new Director of Studies, Katie Scott, adopted the task/topic-based teaching programme devised by our previous DoS, Fred Gooch. It is a programme that our students will not encounter in their own classrooms. The teachers are introduced to this first in a handbook we print and distribute before they arrive. Then there is an induction session the day before the students come. Each School has its own Course Tutor

(a senior teacher) and regular visits from the Director of Studies, to ensure that standards are maintained and that an in-service teacher-development programme is in place. As one of the Course Tutors wrote in his final memo to me: 'This has been a fantastic year - one which the teachers and I have thoroughly enjoyed'.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

The prizes for Academic Excellence were Marta Arnaldos (Elstree), Sarah Sandberg (Cheam) and Alessandra Forcina (Mary Hare.)

ESSAY WRITING

An essay-writing competition on how VacStuds continues to be 'the time of your life' was organised. The winner at Cheam was Anna Osterspey.

'ENGLISH-ONLY PRIZE'

As promised in last year's 'News' the 'English-Only' Raffle became the 'English Only' Prize. As a result of 'English Only' days and general observation, the staff put forward to me the names of those who had impressed them with the linguistic use they made of the international environment. I chose the winner accordingly. Winners in 2000 were Jacqueline Hartgerink (Elstree), Ida Mathiesen (Cheam) and Ula Cehovin (Mary Hare.)

'ENGLISH-RARELY FORFEIT' (NEW FOR 2001)

There are also a few students who resist all we do to encourage them to use English. Sometimes these are students with a good command of the language, but who limit their social horizons to compatriots. Those who, in the opinion of the staff, have squandered the opportunity to use English in their social interaction will perform a forfeit of the staff's choosing on the last day.

IOL EXAMINATION

The Institute of Linguists Certificate in Spoken English for Short Courses with three grades of attainment at four levels was offered. It is an entirely oral examination and

items we proscribe and items which they are banned by law from purchasing. Rather than admit what they had done, many denied their own involvement and implicated others. This was hardly conducive to the community spirit we try to foster and led to a number of permanent exclusions. The second example is of three or four new students at Mary Hare who met on the plane and announced on arrival that they wanted to go to London the next day - and would we arrange transport. One wonders if they had read our literature as a hotel stay would have been more appropriate. We know how valuable are communal activities in the residential multinational environment that is unique to our schools. Far more so than shopping trips. Encourage as we might, so keen was this group on going its own way that they opted out of many activities, resented having their freedom limited, missed out on most of the social benefits the Course offered and ended up being expelled for taking an unauthorised night-time trip to a motorway service area to buy what they wanted. So we have to contend with a (fortunately quite small) number of young people who are self-centred, have 'attitude', think they know their 'rights', have no idea what they are missing by insisting on freedom and do not have the responsibility or social awareness to use it wisely. They also have no idea that we are required, under English law, to protect them under our 'duty of care'. Parents have decided to invest in our Course and we are keen that everyone who comes to us gets the full benefit. I believe it is a partnership. For this reason, I have written a 'Parental Control Condition' into the contract we have with parents. In brief, I say 'we will do our best to fulfil our 'duty of care' under English law based on good will and the trust established by your and your child's agreement to the 'rules' as evidenced by the signed 'Agreement and Travel Details' form. If your child's attitude or behaviour is such that we find that we cannot exercise the control required to fulfil our 'duty of care', we shall pass responsibility for control to the parent either by requesting the parent's presence or by telephone contact with the child. If this fails and we decide the child is beyond control, we shall expel.'

CHILDREN'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Ours is a new, exciting and active environment. Parental control is absent. Our students are a long way from home, without the constraints and responsibilities that tend to

check behavioural excess. No doubt there is also the desire to impress one's peers. They may call it 'being carried away'. Whatever the causes, some of our students indulge in behaviour that is simply anti-social. If they get caught, they feel they have little to lose. Protected by this feeling that no one of importance will ever know, I am aware that some students have broken our rules and the law. All students come to us after a 'letter of recommendation' has been written about them by their school. To remove this feeling of anonymity and encourage students to take responsibility for their own actions, we reserve the right to send the writer of the original 'letter of recommendation' a photocopy of any correspondence we have with parents about children in our care.

EXPULSION

'Children mature earlier' was the response from a parent whose child was expelled for smoking in the dormitory. This may well be. If so, they are mature enough to know at an earlier age that smoking is unhealthy, dangerous in a school building and contravenes the promise not to smoke that they have put their signature to. It is also illegal for under-16s to buy cigarettes. Such are the dangers of some activities in a community that I state in our 'Notes' and elsewhere that we expel in certain specified circumstances. We make no exceptions. Students know where they stand. Some will take the risk and then ask for a second chance. There will not be a second chance. Parents know where they stand, too.

We need to have these sanctions. There are no 'grey areas'. I have included the following in this section for the last few years. I have added the last sentence this year. It is essential for those sending their children for the first time to read the following:-

UNREALISABLE EXPECTATIONS

We do what we can to encourage students to learn and use the Course to advantage. We do our best to look after them. We make no other claims. We cannot force a child to integrate. While we provide encouragement, they must help themselves. They will find others who speak their language and they may be tempted to take the easy way. They may come with friends from home. We cannot keep friends apart when they are at the same School. They must decide to broaden their international horizons, mix and use English. Parents may make requests, but we reserve the right to place students in what we consider to be appropriate classes and dormitories. The final report we write will be our frank assessment. As the teaching/learning situations are different, it may not be similar to the school report you are accustomed to. The Course is a communal experience. Individual freedom is restricted. Our school buildings are boarding schools - not hotels. Accommodation, washrooms, etc. are shared. Bedrooms are boarding school dormitories and these may be sparsely furnished. Our schools become co-educational only in the summer, so bathrooms may be away from dormitories and boy/girl rotas for their use are sometimes needed. Clothes storage space may be limited. All sorts of compromises have to be made, but for most young people this is part of the fun. We also ask parents to accept that telephone contact with their children, especially in the first few days, is not a good idea. We are not being difficult, just putting into practice what we know from experience works. In effect, what we are requesting is a partnership between us based on our expertise and parents' trust in us. What we provide and the parameters of what we permit are in our literature. We act on the assumption that parents and students read it all. If your child is interested in drinking, smoking, going out at night and leading an independent life, please choose another organisation less restrictive than ours.





Everything on sale there can be bought elsewhere - and more cheaply. There will be a specific shopping trip to a designer outlet centre instead. The third trip will be to another town or place of interest decided by staff and students. The fourth trip will be Sports Day. There will be one or two additional shopping afternoons locally.

We shall try to accommodate individual preferences rather than expect our young people to conform to our (or their parents') expectation of what they will like. There is no point in expecting every student to be interested in the same things. We shall arrange for students to be informed about what is possible at each of the venues and they can decide what they would like to do. What we shall include is transport and supervision. We shall obtain group booking rates where possible, but all entrances will be payable from pocket money. If students wish to go somewhere else, or do something special, we shall try to make the arrangements. At Cheam this summer a special visit embracing the 'London Eye', the Tate Modern Gallery and an open-air performance of Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' in Regent's Park was a huge success. Many like to go 'paint-balling'. The trip to Chessington World of Adventure has become an tradition. If a large enough group wishes to go somewhere, we shall make the arrangements and send accompanying staff.

Whether or not we allow children on excursions to be unaccompanied is subject to our discretion as well as the parents'. A student (and sometimes a parent) may have a view on supervision which is more relaxed than ours. Our view must, of course, prevail as we have to take the responsibility, as mentioned above.

THEATRE VISITS

These proved as popular as ever, especially 'The Lion King'. The choice system introduced in 1996 was used again. Students are asked to choose which shows they wish to see in the order of preference on a form which shows the Invoice number. The earlier the application, the lower the Invoice number. The lower the Invoice number, the greater the chance of getting one's choice of theatre visit. So that there is minimum disruption to the organised programme at the school when there is a trip to the theatre, I shall limit the number of theatre visits to four with just 15 students from each school able to go to each show. This means that students will almost certainly have only one trip to the

ENGLISH LAW

I state on the Application Form that this applies. There is nothing sinister about the inclusion of these words. We are de facto in loco parentis in the summer. We accept responsibility for looking after 300 or so other people's children. Parents trust us to make wise decisions. Sometimes, however, they make requests which we consider unwise. For example, we are asked to let children be unaccompanied by staff when we consider they are not responsible enough to be unaccompanied. Children feel that, if they ask their parents to request something from us, we must comply with a parental request. We are the ones closest to what is happening. We know what a prudent parent would do and would not do in certain circumstances. Legally, we are expected to fulfil the role of a prudent parent - no more, no less. Sometimes we do not agree with what a parent is asking us to do. We shall use our discretion in all matters. Under English Law a parent may not sign away a child's rights. This includes the child's right to be protected by adults. We shall do what we think is right for the child. This is why I state that English Law applies.

MOBILE PHONES

About 15% of students came with a mobile phone, even though we requested that they should not be brought as our experience is that they are a nuisance. We had 'homesickness by mobile phone' this year. A very young student used her friends' mobile phones to phone her mother every time she felt down to tell her just how bad she felt. Understandably, her mother e-mailed me with details and, as I am a professional, I checked the details and e-mailed back. It was distressing for the mother and caused extra work for me. It was ultimately just expensive and time-consuming. When the homesickness lifted (as it always does), the child simply stopped phoning. This instant

ability to articulate transient feelings serves only to exacerbate problems. The parent gets the child's version and has to act on it. A mobile phone gives a young person the ability to achieve the instant gratification of externalising emotions without thinking them through and dealing with them by letting time pass for consideration and reflection. Children are happy to let other children use their mobile phones as this is a friendly act that they think may confer a social advantage. In fact, in not one case this year was any mobile phone call of any constructive use whatsoever. Quite the opposite. The cost of these international calls must be huge. Parents may be surprised at the bill their well-intentioned child has run up for them by letting others make calls. In one case a student who could not go on a theatre trip, saw me in the school all morning, did not ask me why he had not been allocated a ticket, but used his mobile phone to ask his parents who then faxed me with the question and asked me to fax back the answer. What a waste of time, energy and resources. The UK Education Department has now directed that the use of mobile phones in schools be discouraged for health reasons. We ask parents not to send one. Any mobile phone that is brought will be kept in the Office and can be used only with the Course Manager's permission outside the school and outside class, sports and social events periods. Mobile phone battery chargers may not be connected to our mains electricity supply.

TRIPS

In spite of press misgivings in this country, our students' reaction to the Millennium Dome was generally positive in spite of some record delays in traffic jams. London is, of course, on every visitor's 'must see' list. We shall have a sightseeing trip there in 2001. The traditional rugby scrum of a shopping trip in Oxford Street will not be continued.

theatre. This is what happened this year. Those students with high invoice numbers – that is those who applied late (after March) – did not get a ticket. All the more reason to apply early! 2001 Invoice numbers start at 11411. For 2001, I shall replace some of the old favourites with new choices. A 'Theatre Visits' choice list will be sent out in March.

PROPERTY

Once again, we ask that items over £40 in value be listed on the 'Valuable Possessions' form. At the end of the Courses we send back every item of property left behind that was named. Un-named items are also returned if we have a good idea to whom they belong. Property not given to us for safe-keeping and lost other than when in the student's possession on a trip is not covered by the Insurance policy we include as part of the Course Fee.

LOST PROPERTY

Items which may have found their way into other cases in the muddle of the last day are a graphic accelerator card; a DKNY pullover; a red Ralph Lauren polo shirt; a Sony MZR 90 mini disc player; Olympus camera; Santana CD. Let me know, please.

HEALTH

Students are entitled to free emergency treatment under the Medical Insurance policy included in the Course Fee for illnesses or accidents that happen in Britain. Pre-existing conditions are not covered by our insurance. No one is entitled to free treatment for a pre-existing condition unless they have an E128 form for temporary residents. In some countries, those who have private medical insurance are not allowed an E128, so treatment for pre-existing conditions must, therefore, be paid for and claimed from the insurers later. All other students in the EEA (EC, and most other European countries) must come with an E128 form. This is available from health departments overseas and will entitle the bearer to free treatment under the British National Health Service for any health-related condition, pre-existing or otherwise, exactly like a British resident. An E111 form is not an alternative to an E128. An E111 is not required in the UK.

VACSTUDS VIDEO

This has been edited and sent to those requesting it. Each school has its own E-180 'VacStuds 2000 All Over Again'. For those students wishing to relive the summer and for those parents trying to find what made it 'the

best summer of my life', here is instant nostalgia, tangible atmosphere, the magic weaving its spell. Parents of 2001 students who would like a preview can request a copy. It is absolutely not a promotional video. It is a collection of the events I saw as I went from school to school over the summer.

BEFORE AND DURING THE COURSE

Parents are welcome to contact me on any matter. In July and August I tend to be at my desk from 08.00 (English time) until 10.00 and then I travel around the schools. For practical reasons, therefore, it is best to make contact with me during the Courses via the Course Manager. Just before the Course, I send each parent 'last minute' information with my GSM phone number. This mobile phone never leaves me, so I can almost always be reached – sometimes in surprising places. If there is a problem, I can take immediate action – as long as I know about it. Mobile phone reception in Woolhampton is awful, so if there is no response, please assume I am at Elstree and try later. During the period before the Courses, letters are replied to immediately. I shall probably not be able to reply to letters received during July and August until after the Courses, however. If parents could telephone children only on the two specific Telephone Days mentioned in the 'Notes for Parents', this would be appreciated.

STAFF HELPERS

Traditionally, we have two former students on each Course as unpaid helpers, providing a link between staff and students. They tend to be 18-21 and to have left a gap of one summer after being a student. SHs are chosen at the end of the year. Potential SHs should contact me in November. If we use the expression 'leadership potential', or similar, in the report, this is the clue that an application may be fruitful. Occasionally SHs may graduate to Assistant status and more, but this is not generally the case as we look for native English-speaking staff.

AFTER THE COURSE

Please feel you can contact me about anything connected with Britain. For example, parents ask for my advice on continuing their children's education in Britain. I am happy to help. No charge! I see this as a natural extension of my work with young people. Students ask for information, sometimes ten or twenty years later. No problem!

There are three other extensions to my work – The Jörg Weise Association, Giotto and the newly created Vocational Studies Foundation:-

THE JÖRG WEISE ASSOCIATION

WWW.VACSTUDS.COM/JWA

Briefly, the history of the JWA is that in 1979 one of our first students, Jörg Weise, who was with us in 1971, died at the age of 21 in a motorcycle accident. It was particularly tragic as he had shown promise as an actor and was already involved in international work. His father was on the Board of Directors of Bayer AG in Leverkusen, Germany. In the name of his son, I invited Prof. Dr. Weise to nominate a young person for a place on one of our Courses. He agreed, but went further. He asked that he be permitted to nominate and pay for a place in his son's name in perpetuity. He also agreed to the sculpting of a trophy that would be awarded annually in his son's name to a student or students making an outstanding contribution to the international aims of our Courses. The recipients of the Trophy were invited to a gathering each year and, in time, the group grew to a sizeable number. Such a collection of talented young people from many different countries needed more of a reason for being than just an annual get-together, I felt, and in 1985 I put to them the idea that they could form themselves into an Association that would work towards giving other, less privileged, young people the opportunity to cross frontiers. The Jörg Weise Association (JWA) was born. It is now a charitable Foundation, registered in Germany, for the advancement of international understanding. It meets annually and has a well-organised social programme. For those who would like to know more, the Chairman is Manfred Gottschalk (Fontanestraße 21, D-51373 Leverkusen, Germany. Tels: +49 214-45702 and 56481; Fax +49 214-503606; E-mail: mmgottschalk@compuserve.com.) The next JWA Meeting will be in France at Easter 2001.

The Jörg Weise Trophy is occasionally awarded for 'an outstanding contribution to the international ideals of the Course'. It was awarded this summer to Manuela Magliulo, Andrés Arnaldos and Ed Hobbs at Elstree, to Art Henderson at Cheam and to Diana Haltermann, Frederik Vernède and Dave Sampson at Mary Hare. All, in different ways, made outstanding contributions to the aims of the Courses.



THE JÖRG WEISE SCHOLARSHIP

www.vacstuds.com/jwa/scholar

We continue to be associated with the Jörg Weise Memorial Scholarship. The Scholarship is a place on any of our Courses, return air ticket from anywhere in the world, pocket money, theatre tickets and tennis lessons. The recipient of the Scholarship will be the sort of student outlined above who will benefit from attending the Course, but who is unable to apply for a place in the normal way for financial reasons. The Scholarship Committee will take steps to verify the financial situation of candidates. We welcome nominations for the Scholarship in 2001 which should be sent in confidence, and without informing the projected recipient, to Vacational Studies. I shall forward nominations to the Scholarship Committee of the JWA.

INTERNATIONAL CONTACT - THE HISTORY OF GIOTTO

www.vacstuds.com/giotto

The 2001 'Giotto Site' is its 15th year and contains over 2500 names. Listing is provided at no charge. Name, birthdate, e-mail address and brief profile only are included. It is totally financed by Vacational Studies as an adjunct to our work in helping make the world a smaller place. Giotto was started in 1986, the year of Halley's Comet. It seemed to me a pity that the strong international contacts made by our students in their teens should disappear with the passage of time. It is not that they did not wish to keep up the contacts, it is just not easy to continue correspondence after the shared experience of the Course has faded from the memory. Nevertheless, I felt that these contacts, good in one's teens, could be even more beneficial later on. I decided to contact all our past students to see how they felt. It was my biggest-ever mailshot and the response was huge. I named this organisation Giotto after the collaborative European space-probe, Giotto, which was sent up in February 1986 to observe Halley's Comet. No one knew at that time if it would succeed or fail. In fact, it succeeded. The probe Giotto was so named because Halley's Comet features in a work by the Florentine painter, Giotto. When I decided in 1986 to collate the names of our students from 1972 to date and create this international organisation, I did not know if it would succeed or fail. From 1986 to 1997, there was an increasingly heavy 'Giotto Book', posted worldwide. In 1998, there was a 'Giotto CD', light to post, but

complicated to install and use. From 1999, Giotto has existed only in cyberspace.

www.vacstuds.com/giotto is an ideal medium for it.

INTERNATIONAL CONTACT VIA GIOTTO (a message to parents and alumni)

www.vacstuds.com/giotto/workexperience

Almost all the students we have accepted since 1972 have been exceptionally talented. We may well have the crème de la crème of European youth. On Giotto's new web site, we are creating an international work experience section. Are you studying at a university or similar? Do you wish to enhance your CV with work experience abroad? Do you run a business or are you part of an organisation that has a position to offer? Would you like to fill this post with an intelligent young person who would gain from the opportunity and from whom you, too, might benefit? Please go to www.vacstuds.com/giotto/workexperience. Contacts are so important. We wish to facilitate these worldwide. We are happy to provide links from this section of our web site to your own business.

THE VACATIONAL STUDIES FOUNDATION

www.vacstuds.com/foundation

The Vacational Studies Foundation was registered as a Charity under English Law in January 2000 to assist talented children from less-privileged backgrounds and offer them opportunities to develop their potential in environments they might otherwise never have experienced. The Foundation would ensure that the children proposed were placed in environments where they would feel comfortable and able to realise their potential fully. There are no specific criteria to receive support as young people proposed could have a variety of talents ranging from academic to music and the arts. There are already close links with The Jörg Weise Association as Professor Dr Weise is one of the Trustees of The Vacational Studies Foundation. Please go to

www.vacstuds.com/foundation

VACSTUDS.COM

Our web site was relaunched in October 2000 as vacstuds.com. It is our 'shop window' and the main source of information about us. The entire brochure and also this 'news section' are on our web site. Application for places on our Courses can be

that has proved popular with a number of regular correspondents continues. There is now far more than this. Vacational Studies has its own web of contacts world wide. These are accessible to those who have completed a Course as a student of ours.

ENGLISHONTHEINTERNET.COM

New in January 2001 will be an interactive learning site run as a separate entity by our previous Director of Studies, Fred Gooch, aimed at current, former and potential Vacational Studies students and other young people intended to lead to a formal Institute of Linguists qualification in English via the web.

This is a chargeable 'personal tutor' service to support young people's English language learning in their own countries. Charging will be based on time spent on the special premium rate line leading to englishontheinternet.com. Parental permission will be a required before this Internet Course is accessed.



AND FINALLY...

...a few more words from former students. The following is from one who started with us in the '80s:- *'I really needed to thank you for what you gave to me. Vacational Studies were my very best years. They didn't just allow me to learn English. They allowed a little Sicilian guy to grow and prosper in an open-minded international environment, interacting with so many cultures.'* Another has written to me after telling friends about VacStuds:- *'I found that it was impossible to explain the magic of VacStuds. To any 13, 14 or 15 year-old spending a month in a different country with so many unfamiliar faces is a large risk. It is only when they are on the Course that they will know they are having the best time of their lives... VacStuds provides an incredible opportunity.'*

I am truly proud to be part of this opportunity.

IGM - Autumn 2000