



School of English

Friendly Learning



Celebrating
20 years of teaching

STUDENTS' HANDBOOK



www.abcschool.co.uk | info@abcschool.co.uk

2022

Contents

Welcome to ABC School of English	5
Before you travel - pre-departure checklist: EU students and COVID-19 latest info	6
General school information	7
Courses	8
The Callan Method.....	9
What is the Callan Method?	9
How to ensure Callan Method is taught properly	10
Level test	11
Our teachers.....	11
Progress reports.....	12
Tutorials/student self assessment	12
Students' support.....	12
Academic Coordinator	12
Certificate	12
Mobile phones	13
Internet	13
Reception	13
Welfare Officer	13
Students under 18/Child Protection Policy	13
Procedure for complaints.....	15
Students' feedback form	15
Policy on students' attendance.....	16
Procedure for dealing with bullying and abusive behaviour.....	17
PREVENT - counter terrorism and security - general information	18
Social events and Social Media Networks	19
Study room	19
Book/DVDs club	19

Accommodation.....	20
Methods of payment.....	20
ABC Student card	20
London Transport discount card - oyster card.....	21
Student bank accounts.....	21
The fire alarm.....	21
Learning English outside the school	22
In and around Covent Garden.....	22
Libraries	23
General students' information	23
English UK website - lots of advice before you travel	23
Climate and seasons.....	23
TV licence.....	24
Electricity	24
Using mobile abroad.....	24
Banking services	24
Managing your money	25
Money matters	25
Postal services	25
Cycling and driving the in UK.....	25
Cycling	26
Driving.....	27
Legal requirements for the car	27
Registration.....	27
Road tax.....	27
Insurance.....	27
Legal requirements for the driver.....	27
Roadside assistance	28

About the police	28
Registering your stay and biometric resident permit.....	28
In an emergency	28
Non-emergency	29
How to report a crime	29
In case of arrest.....	29
Healthcare.....	30
First Aid	30
The National Health Service (NHS).....	30
Dental treatment (teeth).....	31
Optical treatment (eyes)	31
Registering with a GP	31
Accident and emergency treatment	31
Working in the UK	32
Laws in the UK	32
Places of worship.....	33
Cost of travelling in London.....	33
Racial discrimination and harassment	33
Looking after your belongings	34
Safety on the streets.....	34
Using taxis and minicabs	35
Safety at home.....	36
Electricity and gas	36
Fire precautions.....	36

Welcome to ABC School of English

Dear student,

At ABC School of English, we offer a **friendly welcome to students from all over the world to our school in Covent Garden**. The school is a small, private, independent establishment, and we are proud to offer you a **very personal service in a sociable, relaxed yet professional environment**.

ABC School was opened in 2002, and since then we have successfully taught many thousands of students and have built a strong reputation for quality of service. We are accredited by the **British Council, Callan Method Organisation (CMO)** and are a **member of English UK**, all of which guarantee quality.

We understand that coming to London is a very big decision to make, especially more so now with the current pandemic, and we always do our best to ensure that you feel safe and comfortable whilst studying with us. We offer support in all areas including your progress, **accommodation, life in London** as well as any other issues you may have. Bookings with English UK member schools can be made with confidence. These schools are accredited by the British Council's government-recognised quality assurance scheme and Accreditation UK. We are delighted to inform you that ABC School of English has been accredited since 2009.

In addition to studying, we also want you to have fun, and we arrange a variety of **social events** where you can **meet new people, learn about English culture and practise your English outside the classroom**.

We hope to welcome you in the school soon!

Sue Rao, BA (Hons), MSc

Principal

ABC School of English

63, Neal Street, London WC2H 9PH

T: + 44 (0) 20 7836 8999

School Emergency number: + 44 (0) 7812 438 670

E: info@abcschool.co.uk

www.abcschool.co.uk

Before you travel - pre-departure checklist including changes for EU students

Check that you have all the documentation and items you will need before coming to the UK:

- Passport - for all students
- A valid visa (if applicable)
- School enrolment letter (if applicable)
- Accommodation confirmation (if applicable)
- Documentation of funding (sufficient for tuition and living) (if applicable)
- Accommodation arrangements, address, contact numbers etc
- Credit/debit cards
- **Medical and travel insurance - applies to all students**
- A list of what you are carrying in your luggage in case you have to make an insurance claim
- Any prescribed drugs or medicine you are taking, plus a letter from your doctor explaining what they are
- Electrical conversion plugs (adapter)

Visa guidance including EE, EEA and Swiss nationals:

The documentation that you will need to enter the United Kingdom depends upon which country you are from and the length of your course. Entry regulations can change so it is best to check with the British Embassy, High Commission or Consular Office in your home country as early as possible about the requirements for you to enter the UK as a student.

You can also use the [UKVI's website to check](#) if you will need a visa or the UKCISA website www.ukcisa.org.uk. ABC School of English cannot be held liable for any inaccuracies on these sites.

It is important that you establish what UK entry requirements apply to you as early as possible, as it can take a considerable amount of time to obtain the documentation you may need.

EU, EEA and Swiss nationals will be able to come to the UK for tourism or study for up to six months without needing a visa. Students will be able to use the e-gates and **study on a visitor visa.**

It is very important to ensure that you have made arrangements for your accommodation well before you travel (especially during the months of July and August).

You are strongly advised to arrange adequate medical and travel insurance before arriving in the UK.

It is a good idea to make a copy of your passport and keep it in a separate place to your passport. On your first day in the school please remember to bring your passport as we are required to keep a copy on our records.

Whilst at the school you will have a number of expenses: your tuition fees, accommodation, rent, food, books, travel etc. It is virtually impossible for international students to receive financial assistance once they arrive in the UK and opportunities for paid employment are likely to be limited. Therefore, it is very important that you make financial arrangements to ensure that you have sufficient funds to complete your course of study.

Coronavirus (Covid-19) info for students: this is an ongoing situation and we encourage students to check the following [website for the latest information](#). ABC School of English continues to work with English UK and our local council to provide appropriate and up to date guidance to students.

General school information



At ABC School you learn and improve your English and at the same time, you make friends from all over the world.

Our classes are multinational and form an exciting community in which you learn, have fun and speak English on a daily basis. It is without doubt the best way to learn English.

We are located in Covent Garden, in the heart of the West End, one of the trendiest and most diverse parts of London. The school is a short walk from Covent Garden, Leicester Square, Holborn and Tottenham Court Road underground stations (Piccadilly, Northern and Central Lines).

The reception is open between the hours of 10.00 and 16.30, classes run from 10.30 until 16.30 Monday to Friday, except public holidays (due to the situation with COVID-19, we are still running a reduced timetable and hours are subject to change at short notice, please see the school's website for the latest opening hours, and the price list for details of public holidays).

Beginners' classes start on Mondays. Please contact us to check when the next beginner course is due to start. We try our best to run these courses at least once a month.

At ABC School we offer English courses to fit in with your academic, personal or professional commitments. All courses run from Monday to Friday, at various levels all year round. Whatever your level of English, from beginner to advanced, you can choose to study for any length of time. You can combine different courses to suit your individual requirements. All groups consist of students of all ages, backgrounds and nationalities which creates an exciting educational environment.

Courses

1. If you would like to improve your spoken English, you can choose **Callan Method courses** which focus on **speaking, listening and pronunciation**. Students arriving in London for the first time find it difficult to understand, hold and follow a conversation in English. The Callan Method helps them to overcome their shyness in speaking English and forces them to think in English. Callan Method courses are for all levels from complete beginner to upper-intermediate/advanced.

2. **General English courses** focus on accuracy and fluency with an integrated skills and strategy-based curriculum that aims to develop the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The course also focuses on improving pronunciation and increasing vocabulary.

The general English courses are for intermediate/upper intermediate and advanced students (CEFR B1/B2/C1). As we do not always have all levels running at the same time, it is best to contact us to check.

3. **Intensive English** courses offer full immersion in the English language and are one of the most popular courses in our school. These courses combine General English with the Callan Method, students can choose from:

- 20 lessons per week - 15 lessons of General English and 5 lessons of Callan Method

- 25 lessons per week - 15 lessons of General English and 10 lessons of Callan Method
- 30 lessons per week - 15 lessons of General English and 15 lessons of Callan Method

4. Exams courses are designed for students who are interested in taking external exams (Cambridge examinations) or those who are preparing for university (IELTS exams). Contact the reception to find if and when the next course will be available.

5. One to One lessons - we arrange **private lessons** in which you can decide exactly what you want to learn. Lessons cover **General English/Callan Method/Business English/Bespoke** to work on your pronunciation and speaking, but also specific work-related topics, for example preparing for a specific meeting. Please contact the school at info@abcschool.co.uk or **+44 (0) 207 836 8999** if you would like to book one to one lessons.

We are happy to offer **online one to one lessons** if you wish to improve your English whilst staying at home. Please let us know if this is of interest to you.

Callan Español has been developed using the principles of the Callan Method. These courses are held in the evenings, 18.30 to 20.20, once or twice a week. These courses are currently on hold until further notice.

The Callan Method

The Callan Method is based on two lessons, the first of which is all revision, where we repeat questions and answers from previous lessons. In the second lesson, there is a little more revision before the teacher introduces and explains new vocabulary and grammar. The teacher then asks questions practising the new vocabulary and grammar. In both lessons there will be a reading and a dictation - so please remember to bring a pen or pencil and some paper to write on.

What is the Callan Method?

From our knowledge and experience of the Callan Method, we think it is the **quickest and the most reliable method of teaching English**.

The Method was founded in 1960 and has since proved itself to be very popular among students. Due to the unique nature of the Callan Method, **you will speak for much of the lesson** - this is very important, as the only way to learn to speak a language is to speak it.

Callan Method is a direct method created specifically **to enhance your comprehension and speaking abilities in a pleasant but intensive atmosphere.** The question-answer format of the lesson ensures that you are actively involved in hearing and using the language to a maximum. The teacher keeps the lesson moving swiftly in order that you learn to understand English at its natural spoken speed.

Speed, correction and repetition are the basis of the Method:

Speed: the lessons are taught at a fast speed. There is no time to think and translate into your own language. This quickly improves your confidence and speaking skills.

Correction: you will listen and speak for most of the lesson and your mistakes will instantly be corrected by your teacher.

Repetition: the lessons are taught through constant repetition and revision of grammatically correct sentences.

How to ensure Callan Method is taught properly

Points the student should be looking for:

1. **Punctuality** - the teacher should arrive in the classroom on time.
2. **Keeping strictly to the Method** - teachers and students should adhere strictly to the Method.
3. **No chatting and free conversation** - chatting is the greatest enemy of the Callan Method. It is generally very time wasting and the student learns nothing new.
4. **Standing up** - when the teacher is asking questions, he should be standing up and moving around. If he sits down, he is much less dynamic, the lesson moves at a slower pace, and students become bored. The teacher can of course sit down during the reading and dictation.
5. **Speed** - the teacher should speak at top speed the whole lesson. He should never stop talking. Speed also trains the student to hear English spoken faster than normal conversational speed, so that when he hears the language spoken outside the classroom, he has no difficulty in understanding it.
6. **Asking the question twice** - the teacher should ask each question twice at top speed and automatically tag on the first two or three words of the student's answer all in the same breath. For example; "is the table behind me, is the table behind me no the table isn't.....".

7. **Dragging the answer out of the student** - the teacher should not wait a second for the student to answer a question. He should immediately begin to drag the answer out of the student.

8. **Speaking with the students the whole time** - the teacher should answer with the student the whole time, even though the student might be answering correctly and needing no help.

9. **Correcting pronunciation** - one of the most important aspects of learning English is achieving the correct pronunciation. Each time the student makes a mistake, the teacher should quickly correct him by imitating the mistake and then getting the student to repeat the correct version.

10. **Quick fire questions** - the moment one student has finished answering a question, the teacher should start asking the next question. There should not be a moments silence.

11. **Readings and dictations** - a reading and dictation should take place during every fifty minute lesson. Whilst the student is reading, the teacher should be reading with him in order to hurry him along, correct his pronunciation and hold the attention of the rest of the class.

12. **A fair share of questions** - it is obviously not possible for teachers to ask each student exactly the same number of questions, but if a student feels he is not getting his fair share, he can politely point this out to the teacher at the end of the lesson or speak to the receptionists.

13. **Changing the questions** - each question is carefully arranged so as to obtain maximum effectiveness, and as such should not be changed.

14. **Pointing at the student** - the teacher should not use the student's name when asking him a question; it slows the lesson down. Instead, he should just point to the student he wants to answer the question (preferably with a pencil rather than a finger).

Level test

For all courses, we will test your level of English via an online English test, which will be emailed to you, and assign you to the appropriate class. From then on, we will assess your progress and closely monitor your speed of learning. We may also arrange a spoken level test with a teacher if we think this may be useful.

If at any time you would like to change your time of studies or your level, please speak to the receptionists. They will try their best to accommodate your request, providing there is a place in a class at the same level. Changes in level will depend upon your teachers' approval. This is only applicable once during your enrolment.

Our teachers

Our teachers are all native English speakers, and most are TEFL qualified and or educated to degree level. They are thoroughly trained to teach using the Callan Method. Choosing the

best teachers is our priority as experience has taught us that the careful selection of our teachers is vital for students' success.

Progress reports

Your progress reports are available from the reception. Depending on which course you attend, reports are generated either at the end of each Callan stage exam or on a monthly basis. An email will be sent to you confirming when your report is ready.

Tutorials - student self-assessment

You will be asked to fill in the self-assessment form which covers the following: grammar, vocabulary, reading, listening, writing, and speaking. You will also have a chance to add any comments regarding your studies with us. We will then arrange for you to see a teacher who will go through the form with you. The teacher's comments will cover participation in class, progress, attendance, and your punctuality. They will also prepare targets for your future learning.

Tutorials are booked in advance for students who are enrolled for a minimum of 24 weeks. Any additional tutorials can be arranged with a fee. If you would like to book a tutorial and you are enrolled on a shorter course, please go to the reception to arrange this; charges apply. Tutorials may be cancelled or rescheduled at short notice in case of staff absence.

Students' support

A member of teaching staff is always available for you to discuss any personal issues you may have. Please check the notice board or ask in the reception for full details. (This may be cancelled or rescheduled at short notice in case of staff absence).

Academic Coordinator/Director of Studies (DOS)

Our Academic team is responsible for the English educational programme, quality of teaching and academic resources. If you have any questions regarding your course or your progress, please book a tutorial or arrange to see our Academic Coordinator or DOS via the reception.

Certificate

Upon completion of your studies, you will receive a certificate stating the level you have reached. Please advise the reception two days before you finish your course in order that the certificate can be prepared for you. Certificates are issued to all students whose attendance is 80% and above.

Mobile phones

The school operates a strict policy on mobile phones. During lessons, all mobile phones must be switched off or put on silent mode and also kept out of sight.

Mobile phones may be used during general English classes when instructed by the teacher, purely as a learning tool.

Mobile phones may **never** be used during Callan Method classes.

Internet

There is free Wi-Fi throughout the school. Please ask the reception for the password. For security purposes, we would ask you to keep the password to yourself and not to pass it on to anyone else.

The password is changed from time to time as a security measure. If you find that you cannot access the Wi-Fi, please come and ask us for the new password.

Reception

Our friendly and experienced staff will:

- offer information on a range of issues, including accommodation, bank accounts and working regulations within the UK;
- arrange a variety of social events such as theatre, cinema, parties and sporting events for you to enjoy while studying at ABC School. A great way to enjoy London and make new friends. There are two social events organised per month, please check the school's website for full details: <http://www.abcschool.co.uk/student/social-programme.html>



Welfare Officer

If you have any personal problems, questions relating to living in London or any issues, even if you think it is a relatively minor issue, you can contact our Welfare Officer, Bozena, who will be happy to discuss this with you.

Students under 18

If you are under 18, please read the following information very carefully.

We primarily cater for students over 18 years old so you will find yourself in classes with adults. This will have been clearly explained to your parents/legal guardian when the booking was arranged.

On your first day in the school:

1. You will receive one to one induction with one of our receptionists. They will provide you with more information and advice to make sure your stay with us and in London is safe and enjoyable.
2. You will receive an ABC student card. You should always carry your student card with you. This card has the school emergency telephone number on it.
3. A form (which you need to sign when you arrive and leave the school) will be explained to you.
4. You will be asked to let the school know if you are running late for your lessons, or if you will be absent from the school. If you do not arrive for your lessons an email will be sent to you after 15 minutes (unless you request a phone call). The school will wait until the next break and if you are still not in the class or have not contacted us, the receptionists will contact your parents/guardian's on the numbers provided.
5. The school database will hold the following details:
 - Your parents', legal guardians' or nominated representatives' 24 hour contact telephone numbers.
 - Your full address in London.

They will receive the school's emergency telephone number and the host's contact number, if applicable.

Please check the school's calendar for social events which are suitable for under 18s'. You can check this on our monthly calendar in the reception or on our website. Please look out for the following sign which indicates that this event is suitable for you:

Under 18

There will be a DBS checked member of staff present if a minor is in attendance at a school social event. In accordance with National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) guidelines there will always be one member of staff for every ten minors.

What to do if you have any problems:

- If you have any issues with your class, please speak to the receptionists who will speak to your teachers to find a solution.
- If you have any problems with your accommodation, please speak to the receptionists, who will work with our accommodation agency to solve the problem.

- If you would like to talk about your health and happiness, or the welfare of another student you know, please talk to Bozena who is our Welfare Officer, and also a First Aider.
- If you feel unhappy, or another student is making you feel uncomfortable please speak to a member of staff immediately.
- Any concerning behaviour, either in the school or in our homestays, may be reported to your parents/guardians.

Sue Rao, the Principal, holds level 1, 2 and 3 Safeguarding certificates and is a First Aider.

ABC School Child Protection Policy

ABC School recognises its responsibilities with regards to students under the age of 18 and is committed to a practice which protects children and young adults from harm.

The school's Child Protection Policy is available upon request.

Procedure for complaints

If at any time during your course, you feel the need to complain, you can choose from the following options:

1. speak to a member of staff in the reception
2. post the complaint in the feedback box
3. arrange to see the Academic Coordinator/DOS

The school welcomes constructive comments; all complaints are taken extremely seriously and dealt with in a discreet and professional manner.

If you feel that your complaint has not been resolved, you may direct your complaint to English UK. How to contact them:

Write to: English UK, 47 Brunswick Ct, Tanner St, London SE1 3LH

Or e-mail info@englishuk.com

Students' feedback form

You will be asked to provide your initial feedback on your third day in the school. These online forms are anonymous and are treated confidentially. Please take the time to complete the feedback form when you receive an email from the school. This enables us to monitor standards of teaching and the services we offer, and to make adjustments and changes which are beneficial to all.

At the end of your stay, we will ask you to fill in the online satisfaction form which will be emailed to you or is available in the reception.

On a quarterly basis we will provide a short summary from the students' feedback - check out the notice board!

Policy on students' attendance and lateness

You are expected to attend all of your classes. You should inform the school about any absences; it is your responsibility to do so. Any absences should only be for authorised holidays. Courses will not be extended due to illness, unless certified by a UK GP and at the discretion of the school. All lessons missed due to unauthorised absence will be lost.

If you fail to attend your lessons for five consecutive days, without prior authorisation, you will automatically be removed from the class register. There is no guarantee that you will go back to your original class upon your return. You will also receive an email from the school asking about your absence and the reason for it, after the first three days and a reminder will follow shortly afterwards if there is no response.

It is your responsibility to provide the school with your correct email address. If after one week you have not responded, we will send you a reminder. If you do not respond to this reminder, we will assume that you have abandoned your course and we will inform the relevant authorities, if applicable. If you return after this point, your case will be considered by the Reception Manager, and it will be decided at that time whether or not you can return to school. In this case, we will not be able to guarantee you a place in the same class as you studied before, and you may have to attend at a different time.

All this information will be kept on your records.

You are required to arrive for **your lessons on time**. Late arrival in the classroom is disruptive to the entire class and may result in you being denied access to the class - no refunds or credit will be given in such cases.

We have the following procedure in place for students who are 10 or more minutes late twice in the same week.

1. The receptionists will request these students to come to the reception to discuss the reason for the lateness. Records will be made on student's files.

These students will be asked to come to **their lessons on time**, they will be warned that if they carry on arriving late (**10 minutes or more**), they will be asked to wait in the reception for the next class. Records of this will be logged on the database.

2. **Constant late comers** will be asked to wait in the reception for the next lesson.

Visa students are expected to attend all of their classes. Poor attendance may affect holiday entitlements and refunds may not be considered in cases of visa refusal due to unacceptably low levels of attendance.

Procedure for dealing with bullying and abusive behaviour

It is our responsibility to provide a comfortable and safe environment for staff and students alike, and whilst on school premises all students are expected to conduct themselves in an orderly fashion and show respect and consideration to others.

What are bullying and harassment?

Bullying or harassment includes any repeated action meant to hurt or cause distress to an individual. There are many forms of bullying and harassment, for example teasing someone about their nationality, their beliefs, or their physical appearance. Bullying and harassment can be both verbal and physical.

Anyone who thinks that bullying or harassment is happening should tell a member of staff immediately.

What should you do if you are the victim? If you think you are being bullied or harassed, you must tell a member of staff. This could be:

- Your teacher
- The Reception Manager
- The Welfare office
- The academic co-ordinator/DOS
- The Principal

What action will the school take?

- The first course of action is to try to reconcile the situation informally.
- The perpetrator(s) will be required to genuinely apologise.
- If necessary, the perpetrator(s) will be moved to another class.
- In serious cases, the perpetrator(s) may be asked to leave the school.

After incidents have been dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure that harassment or bullying does not take place again.

If bullying or harassment occurs outside of school:

- Report the incident to the school's Accommodation and Welfare officer.
- Tell your home-stay family about the incident.
- In an emergency (such as a theft or assault), contact the police on 999.
- If possible, write down any details of what happened to you.

- If you go to the police station, take a friend with you

Students whose behaviour (including harassment, bullying, actual or threatened violence, verbal and other abuse based on racial, sexual or religious differences) causes annoyance, distress, inconvenience or offence to other students or to our staff may be asked to leave the school and no refunds will be considered in such cases.

In the event of the perpetrator being under 18, parents/guardians will be contacted and informed of the behaviour and any action taken.

ABC School of English celebrates diversity, open access and promotes equal opportunity.

There is a printout available in the reception with details of useful helplines and websites providing, in most cases, free and confidential information and advice.

PREVENT - We are committed to a practice which prevents people of all ages being radicalised or drawn into terrorism. To this end we have implemented a PREVENT Policy, which must be adhered to by all students, staff and homestay providers.

Understanding terminology: - **Radicalisation**: the act or process of making a person more radical or favouring of extreme or fundamental changes in political, economic or social conditions, institutions or habits of the mind.

- **Extremism** *: holding extreme political or religious views which may deny right to any group or individual. Can be expressed in vocal or active opposition to Core British values: including (i) democracy, (ii) the rule of law, (iii) individual liberty, and (iv) respectful tolerance of different faiths or beliefs.

* NB: extremism can refer to a range of views, e.g. racism, homophobia, right-wing ideology, as well as any religious extremism.

Understanding the risk of extremism

- Staff, students & other adults may arrive at school already holding extremist views.
- Or, whilst part of the school, they may be influenced by a range of factors: global events, peer pressure, media, family views, and extremist materials via hardcopy or online, inspirational speakers, friends or relatives being harmed, social networks.
- People who are vulnerable are more likely to be influenced. Their vulnerability could stem from a range of causes: loss of identity or sense of belonging, isolation, exclusion, mental health problems, sense of injustice, personal crisis, victim of hate crime or discrimination, bereavement.

Ways to counteract risks

- Promote a safe and supportive international environment via clear expectations of accepted behaviours and those, including radicalisation and extremism that will not be tolerated.
- Promote core British values
- Challenge radical or extremist views in any context (formal or informal). In most situations this would require an immediate response, referring to the international environment of the school, and the tolerance expected, then reporting concerns.

Any student at ABC School who has any concerns regarding radicalisation and/or terrorist activity should inform a member of staff, the Welfare Officer or the Principal without delay.

All cases will be treated sensitively and in confidence.

A copy of the policy is available upon request.

Social events and Social Media Networks



We have lots of social events planned for the whole year. Please check our Social Networks and [website for full information](#). There are also details about other cultural events happening in London.

You can find out about our events or other interesting news about the school, London, English language, etc. on Facebook, Instagram and the school's website.

If you would like to suggest ideas for school social events, please get in touch with the admin staff. Here you can find the links of our profiles:



Study room

You are always welcome to use one of our rooms for quiet study; please check with the reception which room is available.

Book/DVD club

You can borrow books and DVDs from the reception, free of charge. We have books at different levels of English to suit your requirements. You can either take them home or stay and read them in the study room.

Accommodation

We use the following agencies to provide accommodation for our students:

1. London Host Families and All About Homestays agencies to provide homestays
2. Britannia Travel Services - homestays, students halls of residence

London Host Families and **All About Homestays** - these agencies provide homestays. Homestay is a great way to stay in London. The homestays are carefully selected and visited to ensure that they are suitable for you. There is no better way for you to experience English life than by living in a friendly and caring environment where you can immerse yourself in the English language. We always provide you with a full description of the homestay before any payment is taken and the booking made.

Britannia Travel Services - provides homestays, houseshares and student halls for our students. The halls are located in zones 1, 2 and 3 and are comprised of apartments, a shared bathroom, and kitchen/lounge with breakfast bar. Furniture is modern in style and bedrooms have a single bed and study area.

Kitchens are equipped with laundry facilities, everyday appliances, cookware, crockery/cutlery and utensils.

Whatever kind of accommodation you stay in, it is highly advisable to insure your belongings against loss, theft, accidental damage and fire. If you do not obtain insurance before you leave home, it is possible to do so once you arrive in the UK. Students are advised to book their flights at reasonable times as very late arrivals might not be accepted by the accommodation agencies.

There is a £50 finding fee for all accommodation bookings which is non-refundable. Please ask in the reception for full information and prices.

Methods of payment

You can pay for your course and accommodation in any of the following ways:

- Credit card (we accept all major credit cards)
- Online secure payment
- Cash
- Bank transfer (student pays all the bank charges)



ABC Student card

If you decide to join our school for a minimum of six weeks, we will provide you with an ABC Student card. The student card has the school's emergency telephone number which should be used in emergencies only. The ABC student card can be used in some local businesses which may offer student discounts upon presentation. It is always worth asking! Please check with the reception for the most updated information.

London Transport - oyster card - 30% discounts for our students



If you are a student on a full-time course (15 lessons per week or more) for a minimum of 14 weeks, you can apply for a discount card. Please ask in the reception for full details.

To apply online please follow [click here](#).

Student bank accounts

If you need to open a bank account, the school can provide a bank letter stating your name and address and confirming that you are a student at this school. We refer our students to HSBC, but if you prefer to open an account at an alternative bank, we can provide a letter for this (please mention this to the receptionist). You can use this letter together with your passport to apply for a bank account.



The fire alarm

If the fire alarm sounds during a lesson, please quickly and quietly follow your teacher down the stairs and to the assembly point outside the shoe shop across the road from the school.

If the alarm goes off during a break, please quickly and quietly go down the stairs and to the assembly point outside the shoe shop across the road from the school.

Anyone who is not in the classroom when the fire alarm sounds must immediately go to the assembly point.

If you notice that somebody who was in the class is missing, please alert a member of staff or a member of the Fire Brigade or the Police.

Please remember to remain calm at all times and follow instructions from members of staff. You may not re-enter the building until instructed that it is safe to do so by a senior member of staff or a member of the emergency services.

If you discover a fire in the building, you must immediately sound the alarm by pressing the nearest fire alarm call point. There is a fire alarm call point located on the landing on each floor. You must then quickly leave the building.

We are, by law, required to carry out fire drills twice a year. This means that the fire alarms will sound, and we need to evacuate the building. You must follow the above procedure, even if you know that it is only a false alarm. Failure to do so may endanger yourself and others.

The fire marshals are Bozena Grzelak and Sue Rao.

Learning English outside the school

You will want to make the most of studying English in an English speaking environment, so make sure you use the language you have learnt outside the school.

Our students and teachers meet on Fridays in our local pub. It is a great way to meet new friends and practise your English. Follow our [blog for the latest tips from our teachers!](#)

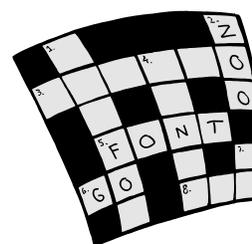
Read English magazines, newspapers and books. You can find material in English about anything you are interested in. Visit your local library and spend an afternoon just reading English.

Listen to English by watching television, listening to the radio, listening to music, going to the cinema.

Follow these links:

- www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron
This can help you with your pronunciation

Do crosswords, find an easy quick crossword to do, some of the words might be above your level, but have your dictionary to hand and you will greatly improve your vocabulary.



Speak English to English people; ask them for the time or information. Avoid speaking your own language; ask your friends to try to speak English most of the time. Use your English in shops, restaurants, museums, banks, stations etc.

Above all, enjoy your learning experience in London!

In and around Covent Garden

There is a free Covent Garden magazine which tells you all about Covent Garden, its events and places of interest.

You can find it in the following places:

- the school reception
- shops in Covent Garden
- Covent Garden Tube station



Newsagents:

Drury News - 15, Drury Lane - international papers and magazines and phone cards

Convenience store:

Costcutter - 158, Drury Lane - 8.00 am - 11.00 pm - minimarket

DIY shop:

Leyland SDM: 167 - 169, Shaftesbury Avenue - large selection of tools, paint and DIY equipment

Sports centres (please ask in the reception if any discounts apply for our students):

OASIS Sports Centre- 32, Endell Street - Tel: 020 7831 1804, **facilities include:**

- Indoor pool, Outdoor pool, squash courts, fully equipped gymnasium, exercise studios, café

Libraries

The nearest library to the school is the **Charing Cross Library, 4, Charing Cross Road, London, WC2H 0HF**. Students can register at this library with a letter from the school confirming their address in London. Once registered, students can use all the facilities in the library including free Internet access. If you would like to register with the library, please request a letter from the reception.

Enquiries: email: charingcrosslibrary@westminster.gov.uk

General students' information

English UK - lots of advice before you travel

English UK provides a link to UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) which is the UK's national advisory body serving the interests of international students and those who work with them.

[Their website](#) has lots of advice and checklists to help you get everything done before you travel, and when you first arrive.

Climate and seasons

The weather in London, like the rest of the UK, is unpredictable and it is always useful to carry an umbrella in your bag.

In autumn it will probably be cool (12 - 15 degrees C). From November until about December the weather will be cooler with daytime temperatures around 8 -10 degrees. January and February are generally quite cold with daytime temperatures just a little over 0 degrees. It may occasionally snow in London in the winter.

Spring arrives in March/April when temperatures warm up a little and are similar to those in autumn. From June to August, it can be very warm with temperatures around the mid to high 20 degrees. It can, however, still rain even in summer - so remember your umbrella!

In winter it gets light at about 08.00 and dark again by about 16.00. In the summer it gets light at about 04.00 and will not be fully dark until about 22.00.

In the UK the time changes twice a year. The clocks go forward one hour in spring - usually the last weekend in March, and backwards one hour in autumn - usually the last weekend in October. You will see notices around the school to remind you to do this.

TV licence

If you have a television in your room, you may need to buy a television licence for it. A television licence can be purchased for a minimum period of three months. A colour TV Licence costs £159.00. A black and white TV Licence costs £53.50. For more information on TV licensing, visit: www.tvlicensing.co.uk.

The penalty for not having a licence can be prosecution in court and a fine of up to £1000.

Electricity

In the UK electrical sockets have three square holes for three square plug prongs. The mains voltage is 240v and the frequency is 50Hz.

Using your mobile abroad

Simple and secure way of staying in touch with your family and friends is via WhatsApp. With WhatsApp, you get fast, simple, secure messaging and calling for free*, available on phones all over the world.

*** Data charges may apply, please check with your provider for details.**

Banking services

A **cash card** allows you to withdraw money from your account at a cash machine (ATM) using a 4 digit Personal Identification Number (PIN). Never tell anyone else your PIN.

A **debit card** allows you to withdraw money from your account at a cash machine (ATM) using a 4 digit PIN and you can use the card to buy goods and services. The card can also be used to obtain 'cashback' in shops when you make a purchase. This means that you can withdraw

money from your account at the same time as you are buying an item in a shop. Not all banks issue debit cards to international students.

A **credit card** allows you to borrow money from the bank to pay for items. Remember that borrowing on credit cards can be an expensive way of funding your purchases.

Managing your money

It is advisable to keep a record of money paid into your account (deposits) and taken out of your account (withdrawals). It is also good practice to check your bank statements regularly as it will help you maintain control over your finances.

Money matters

British currency is Sterling. Sterling is made up of pounds (£) and pence (p). There are 100 pence to one pound.

Coins

1 penny	1p	copper
2 pence	2p	copper
5 pence	5p	silver
10 pence	10p	silver
20 pence	20p	silver
50 pence	50p	silver
100 pence	£1	gold
200 pence	£2	gold and silver



The notes used are £5, £10, £20 and £50.

Postal services

Post offices supply stamps, traveller's cheques, lottery tickets and handle car tax payments, among other services. For full details please visit www.postoffice.co.uk.

Cycling and driving the in UK

In the UK, motor vehicles and bicycles (bikes) travel along the left hand side of the road and navigate roundabouts from left to right (clockwise). It is the law for all road users to obey traffic lights and stop at pedestrian crossings if someone is waiting to cross the road.

Before cycling or driving on a public road, please read the UK Highway Code available at:

For cyclists: <https://www.gov.uk/rules-for-cyclists-59-to-82>

For drivers: <https://www.gov.uk/rules-drivers-motorcyclists-89-to-102>

Cycling has become very popular in the recent months and we strongly recommend our students to cycle, if possible and practical, to the school.

London's roads are extremely busy and so be extra careful. You should never ride side by side to another bike as you can easily be knocked off by a motor vehicle.

You should wear a good quality, well fitting cycle helmet as it will protect your head from serious injury if you are involved in an accident. You should also wear a reflective strip or vest when cycling in poor light or at night. Avoid wearing dark clothes at night as drivers and pedestrians will have difficulty seeing you.

All bikes must have front (white) and rear (red) lights so that drivers and pedestrians can see you in poor light or at night. You must obey the rules of the road and should refer to "The Highway Code" for full information. Brakes must be in good working order and you should never ride your bike if your brakes are not working correctly.

Remember to lock you bike with a good secure lock if you leave it in a public place. Do not expect it to still be there when you return if you do not lock it!

Although some drivers will give cyclists the right of way (allow the bike to move in front of the motor vehicle) not all drivers will do this, and you must not assume that you will be able to cut in front of a motor vehicle.

Be very cautious of lorries and high sided vehicles, remember - if you cannot see their mirrors, they cannot see you.

Cycling - Santander bikes



Santander Cycles is London's self-service, bike-sharing scheme for short journeys. You can hire a bike from as little as £2. Simply go to any docking station with your bank card and touch the screen to get started. For more information follow this link:

<https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/cycling/santander-cycles>

Driving

Before driving in England, Scotland or Wales as an international student it is important that you fulfil the legal requirements and are aware of the correct procedures.

Legal requirements for the car

All motor vehicles in the UK must be registered, taxed and insured. If the car is more than three years old, it must have a valid MOT certificate (Certificate of Roadworthiness). An MOT certificate is valid for 12 months and a new certificate must be obtained before the previous one expires.

Registration

As a general rule, you should not buy a vehicle without a registration document. The registration document is a good indication that the vehicle has not been stolen, although it does not prove legal ownership.

Road tax

Road Tax for your vehicle is needed before it can be driven. Do not attempt to drive a car which is not taxed, it is a criminal offence.

Insurance

All drivers in the UK are required to have valid insurance for the vehicle they are driving. See www.theAA.com or www.RAC.co.uk for information about insuring your vehicle. Failure to possess valid and adequate insurance is a criminal offence.

Legal requirements for the driver

Drivers must have a licence to drive in the UK. British driving licences are issued by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA).

If you wish to drive in the UK, you must find out whether you can use your existing licence and for how long. Normally a person can only drive in the UK for a maximum of 12 months on an overseas drivers licence. You should [read the UKCOSA Guidance Notes for Students: Driving in England, Scotland and Wales](#).

Failure to hold a valid drivers licence is a criminal offence.

- Always drive on the left hand side of the road and overtake on the right
- The driver and front passenger must wear a seatbelt
- Rear seat passengers must wear a seatbelt where they are fitted
- You must never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Speed limits must be observed - there are fines for speeding
- Minimum age requirements for driving certain vehicles must be observed

Roadside assistance

It is advisable to obtain roadside assistance cover with companies such as AA, RAC, Greenflag or through your insurer. If your vehicle breaks down, roadside assistance can either attempt to fix your vehicle at the roadside or take you home/to a garage.

DVLA website: www.dvla.gov.uk

About the police

The police in the UK are friendly and helpful, have a duty to protect everyone and can always be safely approached. They are committed to promoting crime prevention and work closely with educational institutions, their staff and students to promote and reinforce student safety messages.



Registering your stay and biometric residence permit

Some international students are required to register their stay with the police within seven days of their arrival. The stamp in your passport will tell you whether or not you should register. Your passport and two recent passport photographs must be provided for registration purposes. If you live in London, you must register at the *Overseas Visitors Records Office (OVRO), Ground Floor, Brandon House, 180, Borough High Street, London, SE1 1LH - Telephone 020 7230 1208*. If you live outside London, you must register at your local police station.

Biometric residence permit - you will usually get a BRP if you:

- apply to come to the UK for longer than 6 months
- extend your visa to longer than 6 months
- apply to settle in the UK
- transfer your visa to a new passport

For more information, please follow this link: <https://www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits>

In an emergency

In an emergency where there is a danger to life or a crime is in progress, you can contact the police, fire brigade or ambulance by dialling 999 from any telephone free of charge, but this number should only be used in an emergency. The operator will ask you which service you require. Always speak clearly and calmly so that you can be understood.

Non-emergency

You should call **101** to report crime and other concerns that do not require an emergency response.

For example, you should call **101** if:

- your property has been stolen
- your property has been damaged
- you suspect drug use or dealing in your neighbourhood

Or to:

- report a minor traffic collision
- give the police information about crime in your area
- speak to the police about a general enquiry

101 has been introduced as part of the government's wider work to improve access to the police, ease pressure on 999, and help to efficiently and effectively tackle crime and disorder.

How to report a crime

To report a non-emergency minor crime, call your local police station - you can find their number in the telephone directory. Alternatively, ask someone you know and trust to make the call for you or you can [do it online](#):

If you have information about a crime, you can telephone Crimestoppers free of charge to report it anonymously on 0800 555 111.

The nearest Police station to the school is Charring Cross Police station - Telephone 0300 123 1212. This Police station is open 24-hours a day.

In case of arrest

The vast majority of international students do not get into trouble with the police. However, here is some information if you do come into contact with the police. The police have the power to stop and search anyone who appears to be acting in a suspicious way. If you are stopped and searched or even arrested, try not to be aggressive and do not try to bribe the police officer.

If you are stopped by a plain clothed police officer (an officer not wearing a uniform), ask to see their police identification. Give your name and address if the officer asks you to. If you are arrested do not sign anything until you have received advice from a solicitor - there is always a solicitor on duty at the police station. If you are arrested, you will be entitled to one telephone call.

Healthcare

First Aid

ABC School of English has two trained First Aiders, **Bozena Grzelak** and **Sue Rao** to help in an emergency and make sure that you receive the correct medical treatment in the case of an emergency.



If you have injured yourself or are not feeling well, it is very important that you tell a member of staff. **Do not be worried or embarrassed as we are here to help you.**

The First Aid box is located in the reception.

The National Health Service (NHS)



Medical treatment:

You should always get appropriate travel insurance with healthcare cover before you go abroad. It is particularly important you get travel insurance with the right cover if you have a pre-existing medical condition.

EU/EEA and Swiss Nationals - you will be required to purchase travel insurance which covers medical costs as you will not be able to access free healthcare in the UK any longer.

Any student with settled or pre-settled status in the UK will also be able to use the UK's National Health Service free of charge. For more information [click here](#).

Any students who come to the UK for more than six months must apply for a visa and must pay the immigration health surcharge as part of the online application. They can then access national health services in the UK including free doctors' appointments and hospital services. If the visa is valid for between six and 12 months, the cost is £470. The cost increases with the length of the visa.

Those who have paid the health surcharge are entitled to free healthcare under the UK's National Health Service (NHS): <https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application>

Use the immigration health surcharge calculator to find out [how much you will pay](#).

This includes access to a family doctor (called a general practitioner or GP) and most hospital treatment, although there are charges for some services such as prescriptions. More about [prescription costs](#) are on the NHS website.

Full details of your healthcare entitlement, as well as advice on staying healthy, [can be found here](#).

If you are unclear about this information, please contact the reception.

Dental treatment (teeth)

There is a charge for all dental treatment. As a private patient, you will be required to pay the full cost of any treatment you receive.

Please click here to [find a dentist](#) in your area.

Students are strongly advised to obtain medical insurance that covers the cost of dental treatment as private treatment can be extremely expensive.

Optical treatment (eyes)

Eye care is provided by high street opticians such as Boots, Dollond and Aitchison, Specsavers and Vision Express.

There is normally a charge of about £15 - £25 for an NHS eye test. If the eye test shows you need glasses or contact lenses, the optician will give you a prescription. Prices of lenses and frames can vary considerably, and it is worthwhile shopping around and looking out for special offers. Some opticians offer free eye tests if you buy your glasses or contact lenses from them. Some charge more than the advertised rate for eye tests if you do not buy prescribed glasses or contact lenses from them. Make sure you check this beforehand.

Registering with a GP

For information on how to register with your nearest GP, please [check this link](#).

Accident and emergency treatment

The nearest hospitals to the school are:

- University College Hospital, Euston Road, London, WC1, Tel: 020 7387 9300
- St. Thomas' Hospital, Lambeth Palace Road, London, SE1, Tel: 020 7928 9292
- King College Hospital and Dental Institute, Denmark Hill, London, SE5, Tel: 020 7737 4000

Most non-emergency treatment is not free.

Soho NHS Walk Centre -not far from the school, provides a range of walk-in health services to the general public Monday to Friday from 8am to 8pm, and Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 8pm. Address: 1 Frith Street, London, W1D 3HZ, phone: 020 7534 6500.

Working in the UK

Students studying with us on short term student or visitors' visas **are not permitted** to work in the UK, this includes EU students.

For full details about working in the UK please go to www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment

Laws in the UK

You must not carry drugs with you of any kind (unless prescribed by a doctor), or use any illegal drugs, including cannabis, ecstasy, LSD or amphetamines.

It is illegal to carry any sort of weapons including knives, self-defence CS gas sprays, guns or stun guns.

You must be 18 and over to buy tobacco. It is illegal in the UK to smoke in any enclosed public places and workplaces including pubs, bars, restaurants and nightclubs. Cigarette ends should be discarded in a responsible manner as councils are empowered to issue fines for dropping cigarette ends in the street.



You must be 18 and over to buy alcohol. Be aware that in certain areas, drinking in the street is not permitted.

The consumption of alcohol is not permitted on public transport.

Never buy property that you think might be stolen, no matter how tempting the bargain.

It is an offence to falsely report the theft of property.

If you need legal assistance, there are a number of organisations that can help you:

Citizens Advice Bureaux at www.citizensadvice.org.uk: they provide free, confidential and independent advice. Advice is available face to face and by telephone on issues such as housing, legal difficulties and discrimination.

This information applies to England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The laws in Scotland may differ from those in the rest of the UK; please visit www.scottishlaw.org.uk/lawscotland if you intend to travel to Scotland.

Places of worship

If you require any information about places of worship in London or close to the school, please ask in the reception. There is a printout available which provides you with the full information.

Cost of travelling in London



Oyster is generally the cheapest way to make single journeys in the Capital.

An Oyster card can store up to £90 of credit, which can be used to pay as you go, plus your travel card or bus pass.

It can be used on bus, tube, trams, DLR, London overground and some national rail services in London.

Pay as you go has several advantages over paper tickets:

- Oyster single fares are generally cheaper
- Credit can be used as you need it and does not expire
- Daily price capping automatically calculates the cheapest fare for all the journeys you make in a single day.

Please visit www.tfl.gov.uk for full information about travelling in London.

Racial discrimination and harassment

The population of the UK is increasingly diverse and a great many religions and ethnic groups are represented. Britain is a tolerant society that believes in respecting the rights of minority groups.

This belief is supported by law: The Race Relations Act is one of the most comprehensive laws against racial discrimination in the world and works towards the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of equal opportunity between people of different racial groups.

If you are subjected to any form of racial discrimination or harassment, report it to the school or to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The EHRC will provide information and advice to anyone who thinks they have suffered racial discrimination or harassment.

You can contact the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on 0808 800 0082 or find out more from their website at equalityhumanrights.com/en.

Looking after your belongings

When moving into new accommodation, do not leave luggage or belongings outside or in an open boot of a car or taxi.

Use an ultraviolet pen to mark your valuables with your name and address. This will enable the police to return them if they are stolen and recovered.

Never leave cash or credit cards lying around.

Arrange adequate insurance cover for your valuables during your stay in the UK.



You may consider registering your mobile phone free of charge with Immobilise Phone Crime (www.immobilise.com). You will need to have your IMEI number (15 digit serial number) when reporting a stolen mobile phone, this can be found by dialling *#06# on most mobiles or by looking behind the phone battery.

Never leave bags and other valuable items unattended in the classrooms during breaks.

Always keep an eye on your bag and valuables whilst in pubs, bars, restaurants and nightclubs. Remember that thieves are watching and waiting for you to leave things unattended

Never keep wallets, purses etc in back pockets. Thieves and pickpockets operate in all parts of London and other major cities.

Safety on the streets

Generally speaking, it is safe to walk on the streets in the UK, although you should avoid walking alone at night and use your common sense wherever you are.

If you are returning home late at night use busy well lit roads and avoid putting yourself at risk by taking short cuts through parks or dark alleyways.

Never carry large amounts of cash with you when you are out.

Always carry enough change to make a phone call or get a taxi should you need to get one.

Be alert and brief when using a mobile phone and try to conceal it. There are organised scoter gangs which target people using their phones whilst walking on the streets.

When using a public telephone, stand facing outwards so that you can see what is going on around you.

If you feel that you are being followed, cross the road (more than once if necessary) and if you are still unhappy move as quickly as possible to a public area, such as a restaurant or bar, and telephone for help.

Do not accept drinks from strangers or leave your drink unattended in public places as 'spiking' drinks with drugs or alcohol is on the increase.

Be aware of others around you at cash point machines and try not to use them at night or in deserted or poorly lit areas. If you must use a machine, go with a friend and leave as soon as you have your money

Have your door keys ready well before you reach the door of your car or house and carry your bag close to you with the clasp facing inwards. If someone grabs your bag. Let it go - your safety is more important.

Using taxis and minicabs

There will probably be times when you need to take a taxi or a minicab; however you need to be aware of some basic safety guidelines.

Be aware that some minicabs that stop in the street or wait around outside pubs and nightclubs may be cheaper but are not licensed or insured and are therefore dangerous and illegal. **NEVER** take an unlicensed taxi or minicab. Either stop a 'black' cab by waving your arm or arrange a minicab by telephone.



'Black' cabs charge on a time basis and can be expensive if the trip takes a long time. Minicabs charge according to distance and you should be able to agree a price before your journey.

It is quite acceptable to chat with the driver, but do not give away personal information.

If you want to, you can ask your taxi or minicab driver to wait until you have entered your house safely before he or she drives away.

For further details how to book a taxi follow [this link](#).

Safety at home

Lock all outside doors and windows when you leave the house.

If you live in a shared house, do not assume that someone else will make it secure when you go out. Make sure you leave the house secure at all times.

If you are going away, tell someone you trust where you are going and when you will be back.



Never leave spare keys outside.

If you are leaving the house empty for a long period of time, ask a friend or a neighbour to go in and open and close the curtains for you. Use a time switch for lights and radios to make it look as if someone is at home. Time switches can be bought quite cheaply from hardware shops and other high street retailers

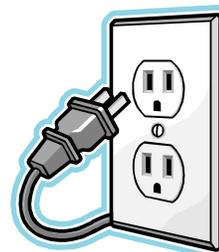
Electricity and gas

The British electrical supply is rated at 240 volts. Ensure that any electrical equipment you wish to bring is compatible. Conversion plugs (adapters) are widely available from electrical shops/supermarkets.

If you have cookers, fires, heaters etc in your accommodation, make sure that they are checked every year by a professional person.

Always keep a working carbon monoxide detector in the house; these can be bought directly from British Gas or from hardware shops and high street retailers.

If you live in rented accommodation, ask your landlord to have cookers, fires and heaters checked. They are required by law to show you the most recent safety certificate.



Whenever you go out, make sure you turn off all gas and electrical appliances such as cookers, irons, televisions etc (but not the refrigerator).

If you smell gas anywhere, either in your house or in the street, call the free gas service emergency number on 0800 111 999. If it is in your own house, and it is safe to do so, open all doors and windows and do not switch anything on or off, including lights.

Fire precautions

Always make sure you have a working smoke detector in your house. Check that it is working on a regular basis, if not replace the batteries or buy a new unit. Know the location of fire escapes, fire equipment etc.