Welcome to the Round Square Students' Handbook for Felsted Pupils Applying for Overseas Exchanges

Round Square Membership

"There is more in us than we know. If we could be made to see it, perhaps for the rest of our lives we would be unwilling to settle for less."

These are the words of Kurt Hahn, whose ideas inspired the creation of Round Square. (https://www.roundsquare.org)
Many of life's important lessons come from practical experience. These lessons stick with us, helping us build character, discover our capabilities, and find purpose.

This understanding lies at the heart of the educational philosophy shared by over 300 Round Square schools across six continents.

Round Square focuses on experiential learning to empower schools to collaborate, share best practice, and connect both physically and virtually. This approach celebrates diversity, develops character, and builds leadership skills, equipping young people to be positive contributors to society and proactive future leaders.

The Round Square community shares six learning themes – called the IDEALS because the first letter of each theme put together spells IDEALS – Internationalism, Democracy, Environmentalism, Adventure, Leadership and Service.

As young people embrace the Spirit of the Round Square IDEALS, they uncover 12 key Discoveries on their learning journey: inquisitiveness, tenacity, courage, compassion,

inventiveness, problem-solving, self-awareness, responsibility, diversity appreciation, sustainability commitment, communication, and teamwork skills.

Felsted is justly proud of its traditions, but we are also excited to be part of a worldwide community of schools who make a difference, go the extra mile and help others, both locally and internationally, and in so doing grow as people who are truly international citizens of the world.

Embarking on a Round Square Exchange

Congratulations on embracing the experience of a lifetime! As Felsted is a Round Square Global Member School, the opportunity to go on an international exchange is available to all of our students. However, only a small number take the leap that they need in order to make the most of this incredible opportunity.

Your exchange promises to be an opportunity that can shape your future in the best possible way. It will open your eyes and your mind to other ways of seeing and experiencing the world. It will allow you to develop an international network of friends and connections in different parts of the globe. It will allow you to take in a new culture and experience it first hand and, perhaps most importantly, it will allow you to alter your perspective concerning possibilities for the future.

This manual acts as a guide to making the most of your experience, it aims to support you in a way that is universal to every exchange, as opposed to a concrete guide that tells you about the best things to see and do in each city. It will also include important information you need to know before and during your trip.

The Round Square Network covers 50 countries, which makes it impossible to tell you about each one in detail. But the principles will remain the same and that is what we are aiming for here. The manual is not designed to be read in one go, so feel free to dip in and out of it and to refer back to it while you are on exchange.

1. How to forge long-lasting connections
2. Learning and using the local language
3. Keeping fit and healthy
4. Engaging with the culture
5. Giving Back to the Felsted Community
6. Reflection

This manual is also written on the understanding that you have chosen your school and that you have secured the dates for your exchange. If that is not the case, please contact Felsted's Round Square Representative, Dr Strong (jces@felsted.org), to begin making arrangements.

Round Square's role in student exchanges is one of facilitator, enabling Round Square Candidate and Member Schools to connect and organise exchanges for the benefit of the students taking part. Round Square does not organise any exchanges itself and is not therefore responsible for individual exchange arrangements. It is important for students and parents to note that Round Square does not vet or monitor the arrangements made by the schools and does not have any contact with or role in selecting host families. Round Square provides schools with best practice protocols but you must satisfy yourselves that the arrangements made by the individual school you are considering allowing your child to visit are appropriate. Round Square therefore accepts no legal responsibility or liability for student exchanges whatsoever. https://www.roundsquare.org

1. How to forge long-lasting connections

By embarking on your exchange you are committing to making a difference in your education and in the lives of the people you will meet. You are doing something that not very many other pupils do and this is sure to help you in your future. You can use your experience on your CV, you can use it for your own benefit at Felsted and you can use it when you apply to university or for an apprenticeship.

As part of your exchange you will either be staying with a local family or living in a boarding house at your host school. Each of these options will provide you with an opportunity to make new friends and start building on your connections. Connections are hugely important of course, as they can offer you insight into the local culture as well as providing opportunities in the future.

If you are staying with a family as part of a home stay, be sure to take your host-family up on any cultural outings that they might offer you. If they invite you to go and visit other family members, attend a birthday celebration or social function, visit a tourist site or take a cultural day trip, always be sure to take advantage of these opportunities. Even if you do not feel ready to fully throw yourself into such a new environment, engaging with the family and their recommended activities will make your experience most unique. To make your stay as comfortable as possible, please be sure to let them know of any preferences you might have with regards to food or living arrangements. If they know what to expect from the beginning, this will help them to provide you with the best possible experience. However, do not use this as an opportunity not to try new things. Culture is often best experienced through food, so try as many exciting new dishes as you can, whenever the opportunity arises. Even if it does not sound particularly appetising, do try it as the experience will help to forge a stronger bond with the family.

If you are living in a boarding house, get to know your neighbours as quickly as possible. If you are in a dorm, this will be easy to do. Find out how many people you might be sharing with and take some gifts with you from your home country - this will help you to make friends and settle in quickly. Be sure to find out from the other pupils when the best social events take place and whether or not there are any school trips that are happening while you are on exchange. Also be sure to find out information about the school campus. Due to the fact that they live at the school throughout the year, host pupils will know the best places to get a coffee or find a tasty dessert, and which parts of the nearest town or city are best to explore. Also be sure to get to know any other exchange pupils who are staying at the same time as you. They may come from a range of different backgrounds, and if it is possible to forge ties with other pupils from different parts of the world, this will add to the richness of your experience.

2. Learning and using the local language

There are apps for learning almost every language represented in the Round Square community of schools. Many of these apps are free or have a small subscription fee. They will prove invaluable in making a strong connection with people if you are going to a country where English is not the first language. Even if you download the app before you take off and learn a few words and sentences while you are on the plane, the adults that you interact with in particular, will be most impressed if you are able to muster a few words in the local language.

However, it is not essential to have formally studied the language that you are going to be surrounded by. Many of our past exchange pupils have visited Argentina or Colombia without having a strong grasp of Spanish. As long as you have a willingness to learn some new words and work outside of your comfort zone, you will do well.

Even for countries that speak English as a first language, there will always be idioms or colloquial phrases that get used at school or at home. Learning as much as you can about local terminology in places like Ghana, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand is always going to be helpful.

3. Keeping fit and healthy

In order to make the most of your experience, it is highly recommended that you remain fit, healthy and active while you are at your home school. It is well known that long distance travel has the potential to make you feel drowsy and jet-lagged, which could disrupt your first few days at your host school. There are a few simple rules for lessening the effect of jet-lag and physical exertion, which can hopefully allow you to have the best experience possible:

1) Drink plenty of water. Airline stewards are always very helpful in offering Coca Cola, fruit juice, coffee and tea as part of the in-flight service. However, all of these have the potential to make you feel more drowsy and disengaged when you fly. By sticking to water, you retain your highest level of hydration and suffer absolutely no side-effects.
2) Get as much sleep as possible. Even if it means that you are out of sync with your surroundings for a few days, by sleeping when you are tired you will reduce the amount of minor damage that long haul flights can do to your body. Always ensure that you get between 7-9 hours sleep per night. If you make this an absolute priority, you will get the most out of your experience.
3) Monitor your steps and keep active. As a minimum, try to hit 10,000 steps per day. The more that you can achieve this by interacting with new friends and classmates overseas, the better.

These are by no means failsafe measures, but they will help you to remain as positive, happy and alert as possible while you are away. If your exchange is only a few weeks long and you are travelling a long distance, this will certainly have a positive impact on your experience.

4. Engaging with the culture

Engaging with the culture means more than taking part in activities, learning some of the language and accepting invitations to take part in tourist trips and social events. Engaging with the culture involves doing some background research and finding out about things that interest you, that are also relevant within the cultural context of the area that you are visiting. This can take on many forms, from learning about historical facts and figures, to brushing up

on films and music. Indeed, popular culture is an easy access point and will bring you up to speed on what the people from your year group will be interested in and talking about.

Be sure to do some research on what's on at the cinema, what the highest grossing films were over the last couple of years and what's top of the download charts for that country. YouTube can also be exceptionally helpful in understanding subcultural and countercultural trends. You are also sure to be able to find out about popular memes. Whatever you are able to determine from these cultural insights, they will certainly prove to be helpful when integrating into your new environment. This integration will help you to obtain further cultural insights as you immerse yourself in your surroundings.

5. Giving back to the Felsted Community

Going on exchange is not an exclusive opportunity. It is a possibility that is open to every pupil at Felsted. Due to the positive impact that it can have, we want to share your exchange experience with as many people as possible. There are a number of ways that you can do that and I encourage you to speak with Dr Strong (jces@felsted.org) as soon as possible to put your plans in action.

The best thing to do would be to speak at Chapel, House Assembly or both. This would provide you with the chance to reflect on your experience and present on the highs and lows of your trip, while also giving you practice in your presentation skills.

In addition to, or perhaps instead of, speaking publicly, it is always possible to contribute to the Felsted Newsletter. This is read by staff, pupils and parents alike and it's a great way to write with confidence about what you have experienced. This does not have to be a long article, but it should provide an insight into your experience so that others have an idea of the challenges you overcame and your own personal recommendations to other pupils who would like to go on exchange in the future.

6. Reflection

Reflecting on your experience will help you to think about how the experience changed you. It is crucial to take some time out to think about the friends that you have made, the things that you have seen, the activities you have taken part in and the impact that all of these things might have on your life moving forward. Think about how you can continue to maintain and develop the new relationships that you have kindled. This would be good practice both before and after you have given back to the Felsted community. It is also worth contemplating how the exchange may be used for work experience opportunities or even university application. However you choose to use these experiences moving forward, you should consider the fact that what you have achieved is above and beyond what most of the pupils do here at Felsted, and for that, you should be very proud of yourself.

Other important Information

Emergency Arrangements and Dealing with Problems

These arrangements are discussed with your host school before your trip. The Round Square Rep at your host school remains your main point of contact in case of emergency.

Health and Safety and Safeguarding Arrangements

Your host school must send a copy of their safeguarding and health and safety policies prior to your visit.

Returning Home and Settling In

Upon returning to Felsted, you will be asked to meet with Dr Strong to discuss your experience. You are also provided with a questionnaire about your exchange, to help improve the process for future exchange students.

Experience from former Felsted Exchange Pupils

This section has been put together by Felsted pupils who have been on exchange in the past. Please have a good read through and get some ideas as to how you might be able to contribute to future additions of this handbook.

Kinga R

Age at time of exchange: 16
Destination: Kirklehof School, Germany
Length of exchange: June-July 2026, for four weeks

Kinga's words: I stayed in Birklehof School, near Freiburg, Germany for four weeks after having finished my GCSE's in June 2026. As it is also a private boarding school, I became a full boarder instead of staying with a family, similarly to the vast majority of the students. Looking back, this was the perfect choice, as it allowed me to fully engage with school life in the evenings, creating some of my best memories from my exchange. As my main aim for this adventure was to improve my German skills, I took all classes in this language, however, the school is also fully supportive of students who only speak English. Apart from in-school activities, during my stay, the village in which the school is located organised a Night Market and a festival night with food stands, amusement rides and fireworks. Although this hilly, high-altitude area get lots of snow in the winter, the weather was extremely warm in the summer, so we swam in the very nearby Titisee lake on the afternoons, and on Saturdays, after class, we were free to take the train to Freiburg, which was a great opportunity for shopping, eating out or exploring the city. Overall, I had an amazing and unforgettable time, and would recommend the school as a friendly, welcoming place.





Loretta S

Age at time of exchange: 17
Destination: The Armidale School, Australia
Length of exchange: July-August 2026, for four weeks

Loretta's words: Going on my Round Square exchange to The Armidale School (TAS) in Australia was an absolutely unforgettable experience that completely changed my perspective on the world. I stayed with an incredibly warm and welcoming host family who treated me like one of their own from day one, showing me around the beautiful New England region and teaching me all about Aussie life. School life at TAS was a fascinating contrast to Felsted; while Felsted has its deep historic British traditions and structured boarding routine, TAS combined a great academic environment with a brilliantly rugged, outdoor-focused atmosphere that felt completely fresh. My absolute highlights were the incredible trips we took outside of school, including visiting the iconic sights of Sydney and spending time on the gorgeous beaches of Byron Bay. I would recommend a Round Square exchange to anyone because it pushes you out of your comfort zone in the best way possible, giving you global friendships and a newfound independence that you just can't get in a classroom.

Who are the Round Square Representatives at Felsted?

Dr Strong

Dr Strong is a History and Politics teacher at Felsted and, together with Mrs Martin, works on all Round Square initiatives. Dr Strong deals with advice and the process of managing the exchange. She can be contacted to discuss the idea of an exchange, answer any questions, and give suggestions.

Email: jces@felsted.org



Mrs Kathy Martin

Mrs Martin is the Director of Global Education at Felsted. She is responsible for Felsted

International Summer School, which welcomes students from around the world throughout July and August. Mrs Martin is also responsible for the LEAP programme for new overseas pupils, Round Square Exchanges and other global initiatives.

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