

Alexander Academy

PRE-ARRIVAL HANDBOOK

IMPORTANT
DATES

SCHOOL CALENDAR

STUDENT
TIPS 101

EXPERIENCE
VANCOUVER

BECOME AN
ALEXANDRIAN

WHAT TO EXPECT



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Welcome to Alexander Academy!

The staff and faculty of Alexander Academy welcomes you.

This pre-arrival handbook will provide you with important information and general guidelines about your time at our high school. Please read this handbook carefully as it addresses many of the questions commonly asked by new international students.

We wish you an enjoyable and successful experience at Alexander Academy.

Spencer Todd
Head Teacher



Before Coming to Canada

Climate and Clothing

Temperatures in Vancouver will range from -5°C to 10°C during the winter months in December to February and up to 30°C during the summer from June to August. The spring months in March to May are pleasant with temperatures averaging about 20°C .

Although Vancouver is warm in the early fall during September to November, it receives a fair amount of rain. You should invest in a good rain coat, umbrella and boots! The odd winter season, we do see snow in downtown Vancouver and especially on the local ski hills in North Vancouver. If you like to ski / snowboard, bring suitable clothing and if its not available in your country, you will be able to purchase items here.

Here is a glance at a typical year of weather in Vancouver:





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Culture, Customs and Etiquette

You will find that Canadians are generally easy-going and do not take ourselves too seriously. We are not easily offended however, there are some cultural expectations and standards you should be aware of. Use your common sense and keep the following tips in mind:

- Knock before entering a home – wait to be invited inside
- Remove your shoes before entering someone’s home
- Say ‘excuse me’ if you bump into someone accidentally
- Use a tissue to blow your nose
- Do not burp in public but if you do, cover your mouth and say “excuse me”
- Do not slurp your food or chew with your mouth open
- Do not ask a person’s age or weight (unless you know them very well)
- Be polite and say “please” and “thank you”
- Walk on the right hand side of sidewalk

We all value honesty and are usually quite direct. If you think you have offended someone, apologize quickly and try to solve the problem.

Canadians speak quietly in public places so you should lower your voice level or laughter. Talk quietly on your cell phone and do not put people on speaker phone. On public transit, be aware of the volume of music in your headphones as having it too loud will disturb fellow passengers.

Canada is a liberal and multi-cultural society. You will see many cultures and visitors here from around the world. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. All people have the right to be treated equally without regard to race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation or disability. Treat others as you would want to be treated yourself.



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When You Arrive

Tips to Help with Culture Shock

Deciding to study abroad in a new country and culture is an exciting adventure! As you adjust to your life here in Canada, you may find that you have some ups and downs. Understanding a bit about culture shock may help to prepare you and guide you through this new experience.

Stage 1: When you first arrive, you will most likely go through the “honeymoon stage,” where the excitement of being in a new place takes up much of your time and energy.

Stage 2: You have been here for a while and are now seeing the differences in your life here compared to home. You may find yourself missing family, friends and your daily life. You are also working on your English skills so know that you may feel tired.

Stage 3: It is normal to feel frustrated at this point and you may feel angry about this new life, your school or your host families. These feelings are normal and will not last.

Stage 4: You will start to feel better and have a sense of humor about life. You will begin to appreciate where you are and the new adventure you are on.

Stage 5: At this stage, you will feel at home and are able to meet the everyday challenges that come your way. You may be thinking about your return trip home and it can be a time of mixed feelings of excitement and a bit of anxiety.

Stage 6: When you finally do return home, you may feel reverse culture shock and it will take time for you to settle back into your family and lifestyle.

Stage 7: The final stage is when you have readjusted to being back home. You will immerse yourself back into your culture and life with the experiences and knowledge you have from your time abroad.

Everyone experiences culture shock in different ways and not all of us will go through all stages or in the order that are listed here. Your time abroad is rewarding and well worth the challenges you will face and overcome. Know that our team at Alexander Academy can help you through and we are here to support you at any stage.

Getting around Vancouver

Metro Vancouver's transit system TransLink offers:

- Buses (including express and night buses)



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- SkyTrain (elevated rapid transit train)
- SeaBus (ferries between downtown Vancouver and the North Shore)
- Community shuttles
- West Coast Express (a commuter train between downtown Vancouver and Mission)
- HandyDART (a shared-ride service for people with disabilities)

You will need to buy a COMPASS CARD to use the transit system and this is the link to that information – <https://www.translink.ca/Fares-and-Passes/Where-to-buy-FareDealer.aspx>

Information on how to use the compass card - <https://www.translink.ca/Fares-and-Passes/Compass-Card.aspx>

If you don't pay your fare, or if you are caught without proof of payment in a Fare Paid Zone, the fine is \$173. The fine increases over time if you do not pay. Here is a link to that information - <https://www.translink.ca/Fares-and-Passes/Fare-Infractions.aspx>.

Skytrain

We have three Skytrain lines:

- Expo Line
- Millennial Line
- Canada Line



Seabus – travel from downtown Vancouver to North Vancouver (Lonsdale Quay)

Visit the [TransLink](http://www.translink.ca) website for schedules, trip planning, route maps and further information.

Website: <http://www.translink.ca>

Phone number: 604.953.3333

Communication

Phone cards are available at various stores such as 7-Eleven and come in a variety of dollar amounts. They are a convenient way for you to keep in touch with family and friends.



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Long Distance Calls

To make a long distance call within Canada, you must dial "1", then the city code. To make long distance calls overseas, you must dial "011", followed by the country code and city code.

Libraries

In addition to our library at our school, we have the main public library about a 10 minute walk from us. You can register online for a library card - <https://www.vpl.ca/borrowing/register-for-a-card-online> or in-person at the branch.

To register for a library card online:

1. Go to the "[My Account](#)" page and click the "New User" button.
2. Enter your information and click "I agree" to submit your form.
3. After submitting the online form, you will be given a temporary library card number to place requests on library material through the VPL website. **This account will expire in 30 days unless validated.** A permanent card is required to pick up requests, access digital resources and for Internet access at the library.
4. To validate and receive your permanent card, see our staff at any VPL [branch](#) with personal identification and proof of current residential address.

Banking

There are a number of banks located throughout downtown Vancouver or near your home where you can open a bank account. You will be required to bring appropriate identification with you to open an account.

Things to do in Vancouver

Majestic mountains, ocean shores, rainforests and beautiful foliage throughout all four seasons make Vancouver one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Canadians are known for our friendly nature, and Vancouver's citizens take great pride in our welcoming, clean, and safe environment.

In your spare time, there are so many activities to choose from! Tourism Vancouver has some great resources for you:

Vancouver Videos

<https://www.tourismvancouver.com/vancouver/videos/>

Most Instagrammable places in Vancouver!

<https://www.tourismvancouver.com/vancouver/vancouvers-most-instagrammable-places/>

#Very Vancouver Experiences!



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<https://www.tourismvancouver.com/vancouver/veryvancouver-experiences/>

You will love our city and do so many things with your new friends!

Safety Tips

As with any big city, safety tips come with the new experience.

- Always let someone know where you are going ie: friend / homestay mom
- Carry ID and limited money
- Take photos of your passport / study permit / credit cards and send to yourself in email so that you always have a copy
- Be aware of your surroundings
- Stay away from dark alleys / badly lit streets at night
- Cross streets only at lights / crosswalks
- Stand away from the curbside on streets and at corners
- Never accept rides from strangers
- 911 calls are free from any phone (pay-phone / cell etc.) and is only to be used in emergency situations
- When purchasing items with your debit / credit card, always ensure the card is returned to you

Becoming an Alexandrian

School Policies

Alexander Academy publishes school policies online and it is the responsibility of students and parents to refer to the Parent and Student Handbook in our Parent Area - <https://www.alexanderacademy.ca/student-life/parents/>.

Medical Information

All students are required to have medical insurance for the duration of their studies at Alexander Academy. Students will be asked for written proof of medical insurance at the time of registration and again on the New and Returning Student Orientation days.

More details are on our website at <https://www.alexanderacademy.ca/admissions/medical-insurance/>.

Wellness Resources

BC Helpline for Children 1-800-663-9122

Resource that can be used to report when a child or youth under 19 years of age is being abused



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or neglected. In British Columbia, there is a legal duty to report this type of concern to a child welfare worker.

Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868

Counselling and mental health support

Child & Youth Mental Health Walk-In

Please view this link to offices near your location -

<http://www.vch.ca/your-care/mental-health-substance-use/children-youth-mental-health-services>.

Three Bridge Youth Clinic

1292 Hornby Street

T: 604-736-9844

Monday – Friday 4:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Saturday Youth / Adult Drop-In 10:00 am – 5:00 pm



Uniform Information

All students in Grades 8 – 12 are required to wear the following school uniform:

Girls Uniform

- White shirt (short sleeve or long sleeve, or $\frac{3}{4}$ length sleeve)
- Cardigan or Vest
 - Graduating students order Collegiate Cardigan
- Kilt (Grey)
- Navy blue tights or knee-high socks
- School blazer
 - Mackenzie tie may be worn
- Optional – Summer Polo which can be worn after spring break until the end of June
- Shoes – black leather or material that can be polished (no canvas or athletic shoes)

Boys Uniform

- White shirt (short sleeve or long sleeve)
- Pullover Sweater or Vest
 - Graduating students order Collegiate Cardigan
- Pants - grey
- Grey dress socks
- School blazer
 - Mackenzie tie must be worn
- Optional – Summer Polo which can be worn after spring break until the end of June
- Shoes – black leather or material that can be polished (no canvas or athletic shoes)

PE Uniform

All students taking PE must have the full PE uniform.

- Dri-Fit shirt and short
- Athletic pants and athletic jacket – students must have one of either the athletic jacket or sweat pants and athletic jacket or hoodie

To be purchased at your choice of department or shoe store:

- Non-skid, non-marking athletic
- White athletic socks



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Cambridge Uniforms

Our uniform provider is located in North Vancouver and you can book a fitting online at the link below.

Welch St. Location:

#135 – 1305 Welch Street
North Vancouver BC Canada V7P 1B3
T: 604 924 9069
Toll Free: 1 800 924 9069

To book a fitting appointment: <https://www.cambridgeuniforms.com/pages/book-a-fitting>



Daily Schedule

Regular Timetable (M, T, W, F)

Period 1	8:45 am – 10:05 am
Period 2	10:25 am – 11:45 am
LUNCH	11:45 am – 12:30 pm
Period 3	12:30 pm – 1:50 pm
Period 4	2:00 pm – 3:20 pm

Thursday Timetable

Period 1	8:45 am – 9:50 am
Period 2	9:55 am – 11:15 am
LUNCH	11:15 am – 12:00 pm
Period 3	12:00 pm – 1:05 pm
Period 4	1:10 pm – 2:15 pm

**Each Block A on Thursday is Home Room from 9:55 am – 10:15 am*

Block Rotation

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Period					
1	A	B	C	D	A
2	B	C	D	A	B
3	C	D	A	B	C
4	D	A	B	C	D
5	E	E	E	-	E



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Extra-Curricular Activities and Clubs

Students are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular clubs to try new activities and learn new skills in a fun and engaging way. We offer a variety of activities during lunch hours and after school (E blocks on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm). You are required to join at least one club and you can initiate suggestions for any club you would like to see.

House Teams

The house system at Alexander Academy is a vibrant and integral aspect of our school's culture. The house system is designed to enhance the values of Alexander Academy as they are reflected in the character of each of our house leaders. The house system aims to help new staff and students adapt to the culture of Alexander Academy while giving students a sense of pride in a supportive and safe environment.

Alexander Academy has four houses, named after admirable Canadians. They are Terry Fox, David Suzuki, Emily Carr and Margaret Atwood. Each house has student leaders. It is not a building that makes a house; it is a network of member relationships, developed through regular interaction in a stable community.



The houses provide an opportunity to take part in positive competition and to develop a closer rapport between teachers and students. A series of events are organised throughout the school year, fostering a spirit of friendly rivalry. The houses compete in a number of sporting, academic and cultural activities for house points. House points are awarded based on participation at these events and also recognise students whose behaviours benefit others, such as helping on school occasions, or simply being supportive toward a classmate or friend. Each term the winning house receives the house shield and other prizes.



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Each house highlights a core value. Together, these make up the core values, philosophy, and ideology of our school, and give us our clear direction.

School Information

Our Team

Our team consists of administration, faculty and administrative support persons who are caring and dedicated to supporting your studies and helping you to reach your goals. Get to know more about us here at <https://www.alexanderacademy.ca/about-us/staff-and-faculty/>

Contact Information

We are centrally located in downtown Vancouver at 688 West Hastings Street one block from the Waterfront Skytrain / Seabus / Westcoast Express Stations.

Address

#200-688 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC,
V6B 1P1, Canada

[Google map](#)

Telephone: 604-687-8832

Fax: 604-687-8872

Email: info@alexanderacademy.ca

We look forward to meeting you here at Alexander Academy!