



VIRTUTE ET LABORE

**St Margaret's School**  
**Student Exchange Testimonial**  
**Christine Meyer, exchange to York, England**

Reflecting back on what was the most amazing seven weeks brings back so many incredible memories, impossible to express in words. The York exchange was a life changing opportunity and gave me a greater understanding of what it's like for families and students on the other side of the world. It brought so many benefits and new experiences to my life, as well as taught me so much about the way in which Australia is seen from the perspective of people our age living in a completely different, yet utterly familiar environment to us. It allowed me to gain so much independence and helped me discover the person I am and aspire to be in the future.

Embarking on the journey from one side of the world to the other was rather daunting and being given a new family and friends for seven weeks was similar to jumping into the deep end of a pool, having barely dipped your toe in to find out how cold it is; but that's the great thing, you have no idea what to expect. As soon as I got off the plane and met my exchange partner, Louise, all my nerves simply disappeared. With a warm welcome from her family, I felt at home before it had sunk in that I had left. The UK weather clearly did not know the definition of warmth, but soon enough I had gotten used to the freezing temperatures and made the most of what it had to offer.

After one sleep at home in Ilkley, we ventured to school and I met my new second family of 60 girls, at the School boarding house. I shared a dorm with three other girls, one English and two Spanish, and we instantly became friends. At Queen Margaret's School it was amazing to meet so many new people from all around the world and to have formed friendships with them is something I will treasure forever.

After a few nights I settled into the routine of 1 hour classes, the school day finishing at 5.30 pm in the dark and not being able to go home until weekends and holiday periods. The school was a sight itself, and at times made me feel like I was at Hogwarts or in a movie. We were offered the opportunity to do so many things, including lacrosse, going to the Pantomime, enjoying different subjects and clubs and they even invited me to join the Senior netball team. Over my time there I became so much more independent.

On weekends and during half-term break I immersed myself into the English culture by sightseeing and experiencing life as part of the host family. We did so many things including going to the seaside town of Whitby; shopping and exploring Leeds; seeing the sights of the old but incredibly beautiful city York; trying snowboarding; and enjoying the incredible views in the Yorkshire Dales and Ilkley Moors. Another amazing opportunity was going to Edinburgh, with the other two exchange girls and their partners. It was one of the most remarkable and memorable weekends and it was incredible to see sights such as Edinburgh Castle and the Royal Yacht, Britannia. London was a spectacular sight. It was breath-taking to see places and experience things I had only dreamed of, including Big Ben, Covent Gardens, Trafalgar Square, Buckingham Palace and so many more. A highlight was also visiting the Harry Potter studios and seeing things that I could only have ever seen on the big screen or television.

The York Exchange was more than just a life changing seven weeks; it offered so many incredible opportunities and gave me so many new memories and friendships that will last a lifetime. I am ever so grateful to my host family and all the girls at Queen Margaret's School for making my time such an amazing experience. It allowed me to shape myself as a person while at the same time being surrounded by incredible people and sights.