



Sage College family guide

Welcome from the Sage College Parent Council

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Sage College community! Whether you're moving to Spain for the very first time or simply relocating to a new region, we know how exciting - and at times overwhelming - this transition can feel. That's why we've created this guide, especially for families like yours.

This is not a school handbook. Instead, it's a community-powered guide put together by fellow parents at Sage College who've walked in your shoes. Inside, you'll find friendly advice, practical tips, and local recommendations to help your family settle in, connect with others, and enjoy all that this beautiful part of Spain has to offer.

We're so glad you're here. The Sage College Parent Council is always just a message away if you need support, advice, or even just a friendly chat over coffee.

Warmest wishes,

The Sage College Parent Council ☀️

About the Sage College Parent Council Community

At Sage College, you're not just joining a school - you're becoming part of a diverse and welcoming community. As a Parent Council, we are a group of parents representing children from all age groups, living in different towns across the region, from Jerez to Rota, El Puerto, Cádiz, Chiclana and beyond.

Our mission is simple:

We aim to foster community amongst families, create opportunities to connect and support each other, and provide constructive, parent-led feedback to the school to help everyone thrive.

Who We Are

- We're parents just like you—some new to Spain, some long-time locals
- We represent a range of backgrounds, languages, and life experiences
- We're united by one common goal: to help make Sage College feel like home for every family



What We Do

- Support new families through relocation, settling in, and making connections
- Organize events and activities that bring the community together (coffee mornings, cultural events, etc.)
- Provide feedback to the school leadership team, offering insights from the parent perspective
- Act as a friendly link between families and the school on non-academic matters

 You'll find more about who we are and what we do on the Sage College website, and you can look out for our regular updates in the school newsletter.

We're always looking for new ideas, feedback, or volunteers—so if you'd like to get involved, don't hesitate to reach out!

☀ From one parent to another: we've all been new once. If there's anything you need—whether it's a playground recommendation or help understanding paperwork—we're here for you.

Where Do Sage College Families Live?

AYour Parent Council has created a series of detailed relocation guides to help you explore life in the local towns where many of our families live. You can find each of these guides on the school website in the Parent Council section.

The table below offers a very brief overview of the most popular areas — to give you a quick sense of commute times, lifestyle, and beach access at a glance.

If you have any questions or would like personal advice about choosing where to live, you're very welcome to get in touch with the Parent Council via email: parentcouncil@sagecollege.eu. We're always happy to help!



At-a-Glance Relocation Guide for Sage College Families

Location	Commute to Sage College	Is bus available?	Lifestyle & atmosphere	Beach access
Jerez de la Frontera	5-15 minutes	Yes	City-suburban mix, convenient, lively	No
Chiclana & Conil	35-45 minutes	Yes	Laid-back coastal living, family-friendly	Yes
Cádiz City	35-45 minutes	Yes	Urban, cultural, historic, walkable	Yes
El Puerto & Rota	25-35 minutes	Yes	Suburban, spacious, community-focused	Yes
Sanlúcar de Barrameda	45-55 minutes	Yes	Peaceful, authentic, scenic	Yes



Getting Settled

Relocating to Spain comes with some important admin steps, especially if you're arriving from another country. Don't worry—many families have done this before you, and help is always available if you get stuck. Here are the basics to get started.

NIE: Your Spanish ID Number

You'll need a **Número de Identificación de Extranjero (NIE)** to rent a home, open a bank account, sign up for utilities, or register with local services.

- Apply in person at a **police station with extranjería services**
- Required documents: passport, application form, proof of address or reason (e.g. school place)
- Non-EU citizens may need a **TIE card** (residence permit)

 Book appointments early, and consider using a gestor or relocation assistant if language is a barrier.

Empadronamiento (Town Hall Registration)

This registers your family as living in a specific town and is required for:

- School
- Healthcare
- Residency renewals

Register at your **local ayuntamiento (town hall)** with:

- NIE or passport
- Rental contract or property deed
- Utility bill or proof of address

You'll receive a certificado de empadronamiento - keep a copy!

Setting Up Utilities

In a rental property, utilities may be in the landlord's name or yours.

- Common providers: **Endesa (electricity), Movistar / Orange / Vodafone (internet + mobile)**
- Bills are usually monthly or bimonthly
- Water is handled locally by the town hall or area-specific providers

 If you're paying for utilities directly, ask the landlord for recent invoices to avoid surprises.



Opening a Bank Account

Most Spanish banks offer **non-resident accounts** to start with. Documents required:

- Passport + NIE (or application proof)
- Proof of address
- Proof of income or school enrollment

Popular banks: **CaixaBank, Santander, BBVA, Sabadell.**

Healthcare in Spain

Spain is widely considered to have one of the best healthcare systems in Europe - and it's accessible for both residents and families relocating. There's a strong public health system, as well as private healthcare for those who want faster access or English-speaking care.

Public Healthcare

To access public healthcare, you'll need to register with the **Servicio Andaluz de Salud (SAS)** — the Andalusian regional health service.

Eligibility:

- Legal residents with a social security number (usually through employment)
- Children attending school are often covered with just proof of residence and registration

Steps to register:

1. Get your **NIE** and **Empadronamiento**
2. Register with **Social Security (Seguridad Social)** if employed
3. Take your documents to the local **Centro de Salud**
4. You'll receive a **SIP card (Tarjeta Sanitaria)** that allows you to access doctors and hospitals

Public health services include:

- GP and paediatric appointments
- Vaccinations
- Emergency care
- Specialist referrals
- Maternity services

 Appointments are often made in person or online using the "Salud Responde" app.



Private Healthcare

Many expats and families also use private healthcare providers, either for faster access or English-speaking services.

Popular private providers:

- Hospiten
- Vithas
- Quirónsalud

Private insurance companies include:

- Sanitas
- DKV
- Mapfre
- Cigna
- Adeslas

 It's common to take out a private health policy if you're self-employed, working remotely for a non-Spanish company, or in Spain on a non-lucrative visa.

Pediatric Care

All public health centers offer pediatric appointments, but private pediatricians are also widely used by families in the Sage College community. You can register your child with a **family doctor** (médico de familia) in the public system, or choose a private pediatrician. Vaccination schedules are typically aligned with the school system, and records may be needed when enrolling at Sage College.

Pharmacies

Pharmacies (**farmacias**) are everywhere, easily spotted by a green cross sign. Many have helpful staff who can offer advice, and some basic medications are sold without a prescription.

Pharmacy tips:

- Emergency pharmacies rotate in each area (look for signs in the window)
- Bring your prescription or SIP card if collecting state-covered medication
- Many common medicines go by different brand names in Spain — ask for the active ingredient if unsure

Emergency Numbers

- **General emergency (Ambulance, Police, Fire): 112**
- **Urgent medical help (non-life threatening): 061**



Residency and Bureaucracy

Navigating Spanish bureaucracy can be a challenge—but you'll get the hang of it! Here are the basics for residency and official paperwork.

Residency for EU Citizens

If you're from an EU country, you'll need to apply for an **EU certificate of residency**. This gives you a NIE number and confirms your legal status.

What you need:

- Passport
- Proof of employment or school registration
- Empadronamiento
- Completed application forms

You'll receive a **green paper certificate** with your NIE. It does not include a photo.

Residency for Non-EU Citizens

If you're from outside the EU (e.g. UK, US), you'll likely need a **visa and residence card (TIE)**.

- You must apply for your visa before moving to Spain
- Upon arrival, apply for the **TIE** card within 30 days

You'll be fingerprinted and given a plastic ID card that includes your NIE.

 Visa types include non-lucrative, student, digital nomad, and work permits—each with different rules.

Digital Certificate (Certificado Digital)

This allows you to access Spanish government services online, including:

- Taxes (Agencia Tributaria)
- Social Security (Seguridad Social)
- Health appointments
- School admin

To get one, you'll need:

- NIE
- Empadronamiento
- An appointment to verify your identity (usually at a town hall or tax office)

Transportation

Getting around this region is easy, with good road networks and public transport links between towns.



Driving

- EU driving licences are valid in Spain
- Non-EU residents may need to exchange or validate their licence within 6 months
- Seatbelts are mandatory, and mobile phone use while driving is prohibited
- Speed cameras are common—watch for signs!

P **Parking:**

- Blue zones (zonas azules) require a ticket from a meter
- White lines = free parking
- Yellow lines = no parking

Public Transport

- Buses run within and between towns—check the local “Consortio de Transportes” site for schedules
- Trains (Renfe) link Jerez, El Puerto, Cádiz, and beyond—great for day trips
- Taxis are available in all towns; use a local app or phone number
- Car hire is widely available and often affordable outside peak summer

 Cycling is popular, especially in El Puerto and Cádiz—look for bike lanes on promenades and parks.

Housing in Spain

Whether you're renting short-term or settling into a forever home, here's what to expect.

Types of Properties

- **Piso** – apartment
- **Casa adosada** – terraced house
- **Chalet** – detached house (usually suburban or rural)

Housing style varies by town—El Puerto and Chiclana have more detached homes, while Cádiz and Jerez are known for apartments and urban living.

Rental Basics

- Rentals are typically **unfurnished** or **partly furnished**
- Contracts usually require **1-2 months deposit** plus the current month's rent
- You'll need a **NIE, proof of income**, and often **home insurance**
- Agents charge a fee (usually 1 month's rent)

 Always ask for an **inventory** and clarify what's included (e.g. community fees, water, rubbish collection).



Shopping and Home Essentials

Getting settled means figuring out where to find what you need—from groceries and toothpaste to bedding and furniture.

Supermarkets

- **Mercadona** – most popular local chain, great quality and value
- **Lidl / Aldi** – budget-friendly options
- **Carrefour** – large selection of international items
- **Dia** – good for basics, widely available

 Try local markets for fresh fruit, veg, and fish—great quality and often cheaper than supermarkets.

Pharmacies & Essentials

Pharmacies (**farmacias**) are everywhere and easy to spot by their green cross signs. They stock:

- Prescription and over-the-counter medicine
- Toiletries, baby products, sun cream
- Minor first aid items

 Shops like **Druni** and **Primor** offer a wide range of cosmetics, shampoo, etc.

Furniture & Household

- **IKEA** (Seville or Cádiz area)
- **Conforama** – sofas, beds, decor
- **Leroy Merlin** – home improvement & DIY
- **Carrefour / El Corte Inglés** – appliances and kitchen goods
- **Wallapop / Facebook Marketplace** – second-hand items

 Home delivery is common. Most shops offer delivery and assembly services.

Leisure and Recreation

One of the greatest joys of life in southern Spain is the lifestyle. With **sunshine for most of the year**, stunning beaches, vibrant towns, and plenty of open space, there's always something for families to enjoy—whether you love nature, sport, food, or just relaxing in the sun.

This section gives you an overview of the kinds of activities available throughout the region. We'll dive into town-specific recommendations in each of the four local guides.



Sage College Activities & Sports

Before we explore what's out there, don't forget that **Sage College itself offers a fantastic range of extracurricular activities** for students of all ages! From **sailing** and **music** to **dance, drama**, and much more, there's something for every interest.

The school also boasts **excellent sports facilities**—including pitches, courts, and indoor spaces—which are used during the school day and as part of after-school clubs.

 Check out the full list of activities and schedules on the Sage College website, and keep an eye on school newsletters for updates!

Beaches

From sandy stretches perfect for toddlers to windsurfing hotspots for teens, you'll be spoilt for choice.

- **Family-friendly beaches:** Shallow waters, lifeguards, and chiringuitos (beach bars) with toilets and shade
- **Surf & water sports:** Popular in El Palmar, Conil, and Tarifa
- **Beach walks & sunsets:** Rota and Cádiz have beautiful promenades; La Barrosa is perfect for golden sand strolls

 Weekend life often revolves around the coast—pack umbrellas, chairs, and a cooler!

Parks and Outdoor Play

- Every town has **play parks** and **green spaces**
- Look for skate parks, shaded picnic areas, and zip-line-style play equipment
- **Botanical gardens** and **animal parks** are found in Jerez and El Puerto

 Kids often play outdoors late—even into the evening in summer.

Swimming Pools and Water Parks

- Many neighbourhoods have **community pools (summer only)**
- **Indoor pools** available in larger towns year-round
- **Aqualand Bahía de Cádiz** is a popular water park in summer

 Swimming lessons are common—ask local parents for tips.



⚽ Sports & Activities

- Football, padel, tennis, basketball, martial arts
- Dance, gymnastics, swimming, horse riding
- Cycling and skating in parks or along beach promenades

🏠 Unique Local Experiences

- Jerez is known for equestrian schools and flamenco
- Try out flamenco dance or guitar classes
- Sherry vineyard tours (for grown-ups!)

🎉 Festivals and Public Holidays

Living in Spain means immersing yourself in a vibrant calendar of **local festivals, religious celebrations, and national holidays**—many of which are deeply rooted in centuries-old traditions. Whether you're watching a parade, dressing up for Carnival, or simply enjoying an extra day off, festivals are a key part of Spanish life, especially for families.

📅 National and Regional Public Holidays

Most schools, businesses, and government offices close on these days.

📌 Common Holidays:

- **1 January** – New Year's Day (Año Nuevo)
- **6 January** – Epiphany / Three Kings' Day (Día de los Reyes Magos)
- **Semana Santa** – Holy Week before Easter
- **1 May** – Labour Day (Día del Trabajador)
- **15 August** – Assumption of Mary
- **12 October** – National Day of Spain (Día de la Hispanidad)
- **1 November** – All Saints' Day (Día de Todos los Santos)
- **6 December** – Constitution Day (Día de la Constitución)
- **8 December** – Immaculate Conception
- **25 December** – Christmas Day (Navidad)

🛒 Shops may close or reduce hours—especially in smaller towns.

🎭 Key Local Festivals

🏇 Feria del Caballo (Jerez)

- Celebrated in May
- Horse shows, flamenco, fairgrounds, and food



Carnival (Cádiz)

- February/March before Lent
- Parades, comedy performances, family fun

Noche de San Juan (June 23rd)

- Bonfire night at the beach to welcome summer

Semana Santa (Holy Week)

- Emotional, candle-lit processions throughout towns

Three Kings' Day (6 January)

- The highlight of Christmas in Spain
- Parade on 5 Jan, with floats and sweets
- Children receive gifts the next morning

Language and Integration

(Includes merged content from “Language & Integration” and “Local Lingo & Survival Spanish”)

Moving to Spain opens the door to an incredible new culture—but for many families, the **Spanish language** can feel like the biggest challenge at first. The good news? You don't need to be fluent to thrive here—just a little confidence, patience, and a willingness to learn will go a long way.

This section is all about helping you and your family feel more connected, confident, and integrated into daily life.

The Language Landscape

In this part of Spain (Andalusia), **Castilian Spanish** is spoken, but you may notice the **Andalusian accent**—a warm, melodic style with dropped “s” sounds and rapid speech. It can feel fast at first, but locals are usually very understanding and friendly, especially if you make the effort to try!

While you're surrounded by Spanish in the community, you'll also hear English regularly—especially at school.

Spanish at Sage College

Sage College is an international school that follows the English National Curriculum, with all core subjects taught in English. However, it's important to know that:

- The **majority of students are Spanish**, many with both or at least one Spanish parent



- **Spanish is spoken frequently among students and parents**, especially in social settings and playground chats
 - Spanish is also **taught formally within the school**, helping students build fluency as part of their education
-  This creates a wonderful bilingual environment where children are exposed to both English and Spanish every day—ideal for learning naturally!

Spanish for Families

Here's how you can help your family integrate while adjusting to the language:

Children

- Children pick up Spanish quickly—especially at school and through play
- Even if your child doesn't speak Spanish now, they'll likely understand basic phrases within weeks
- Some Sage families also enrol their children in after-school Spanish support classes or use language apps at home

Parents

- Learn key phrases for:
 - Shopping
 - Booking appointments
 - Talking to town hall officials
 - Visiting the doctor
- A few friendly phrases go a long way in forming connections with neighbours, shopkeepers, and other parents

English	Spanish
Hello / Good morning	Hola / Buenos días
Good afternoon / Good evening	Buenas tardes / Buenas noches



How are you?	¿Cómo estás? / ¿Qué tal?
Please / Thank you	Por favor / Gracias
You're welcome	De nada
Excuse me / Sorry	Perdón / Lo siento
I don't speak Spanish well	No hablo español muy bien
Do you speak English?	¿Habla inglés?
I'm learning Spanish	Estoy aprendiendo español
I don't understand	No entiendo
Can you repeat, please?	¿Puedo repetir, por favor?
How much does it cost?	¿Cuánto cuesta?
I'm looking for...	Estoy buscando...
Do you have...?	¿Tiene...?
A table for four, please	Una mesa para cuatro, por favor
The bill, please	La cuenta, por favor
It's delicious!	¡Está delicioso!
No plastic bag, thank you	Sin bolsa, gracias
I'd like to pay by card	Quiero pagar con tarjeta



I'm a parent at Sage College	Soy madre / padre del colegio Sage
My child is in Year 3	Mi hijo/a está en Year 3
Nice to meet you	Encantado/a de conocerte
What's your name?	¿Cómo te llamas?
See you tomorrow	¡Hasta mañana!
Do you have WhatsApp?	¿Tienes WhatsApp?

☀ Practical Language Tips

- Use **Google Translate** or **DeepL** app to translate menus, forms, or shop signs on the go
- Practice small interactions daily (ordering coffee, asking for the bill, greeting neighbours)
- Don't worry about getting it perfect—Spaniards appreciate the effort more than accuracy

💡 Tip: Learn “¿Habla inglés?” (Do you speak English?) and “Lo siento, estoy aprendiendo español” (Sorry, I'm learning Spanish)—both are great icebreakers!

💛 Becoming Part of the Community

- Say hello to your neighbours (a friendly “**¡Hola!**” goes a long way)
- Join **local parent groups, WhatsApp chats**, or volunteer at events
- Attend local markets, fairs, and town festivals—even if just as an observer at first

💛 Integration doesn't happen overnight, but step by step, you'll find yourself becoming part of the rhythm of local life.



Safety and Emergencies

Spain is widely considered a safe country for families, and the Andalusian region in particular is known for its relaxed, community-oriented lifestyle. That said, knowing what to do in an emergency—and who to contact—can give you peace of mind as you settle into your new surroundings.

This section gives you a quick-reference guide to **important numbers, local emergency services**, and tips for keeping your family safe and supported.

Service	Number	Description
Police, ambulance, fire	112	General emergency number (multi-language support available)
Health emergency	061	Direct line for urgent medical care
National Police	091	Issues involving crime, passports, ID
Guardia Civil	062	Road safety, rural areas, and general policing

Health Emergencies

- In a **life-threatening situation**, call **112** or go straight to the nearest hospital's **Urgencias (Emergency Room)**
 - For **non-urgent care** (like a fever or injury), visit your **local health center (Centro de Salud)**
 - **Pharmacists** are highly trained and can offer first-line advice for many minor issues
-  Keep a list of any allergies or medical conditions handy, especially if your Spanish is limited.



Personal and Property Safety

Spain has relatively low crime levels, but it's still wise to take the usual precautions:

- Keep bags and phones secure in busy areas
- Lock your car and home, even during quick errands
- Use a safe for valuables in temporary accommodation

 Petty theft can occur at beaches, festivals, or tourist spots—keep valuables out of sight.

Fire Safety and Natural Hazards

- Spain occasionally experiences **wildfires in rural areas**, especially during hot summer months—avoid lighting open flames or barbecues in restricted zones
- **Earthquakes** are rare but possible; familiarize yourself with local guidance if you live in a rural area

 Most homes are equipped with smoke alarms, but it's worth checking when you move in.

How to Report a Crime or Incident

- For immediate danger: **Call 112**
- For theft, lost property, or reporting a non-emergency crime:
 - Go to your nearest **Policía Nacional** or **Guardia Civil** station
 - Bring ID and any relevant documents or photos
 - Some towns allow you to file a **"denuncia" (police report)** online or by appointment

 You may be asked to return with a Spanish speaker to complete paperwork.

Child Safety and School Protocols

- Sage College has clear **safeguarding and emergency procedures**—you'll receive full details when your child starts
- Parents are contacted immediately in case of illness or injury
- For safety reasons, only designated adults can collect your child from school

 It's common in Spain for children to play outside later into the evening—agree on safe boundaries and check-in times as a family.



✓ Quick Checklists for a Smooth Landing

Relocating is exciting—but there's a lot to remember, especially in a new country. These simple checklists help you stay on track, feel more organized, and focus on what really matters: settling in and enjoying your new adventure.

Before You Arrive

A few things you can take care of from abroad, if possible:

- Apply for NIE (or prepare documents for your appointment)
- Arrange short-term accommodation (if your long-term home isn't ready)
- Scan and save digital copies of important documents (passports, rental contracts, school letters, health records)
- Set up international mobile/data plan until you get a Spanish SIM
- Check Sage College term start dates and uniform info
- Connect with the Sage College Parent Council (if you've already enrolled)
- Research neighborhoods and housing options in your chosen area
- Book airport transfers or car hire

Let your bank know you're relocating (to avoid card blocks)

Your First Week in Spain

Things to prioritise during your first few days:

- Register at the **town hall (empadronamiento)**
- Attend your **NIE appointment** (if not already done)
- Get a **Spanish SIM card**
- Open a **local bank account**
- Register with a **local health center** or explore private options
- Visit nearby **supermarkets, pharmacies, and parks**
- Practice a few key Spanish phrases
- Locate the **nearest hospital or Urgencias (emergency room)**
- Introduce yourself to neighbors or WhatsApp parent groups
- Check how to receive **post or courier deliveries** at your address



Settling In: First Month Goals

To help your family feel at home and connected:

- Explore your new town on foot—find your local market, bakery, and café
- Register kids for extracurricular activities or sports clubs
- Arrange transport to and from Sage College (carpool, drive, bus, etc.)
- Attend a local event or fair—even just to soak up the atmosphere
- Enquire about local Spanish classes (for you or your kids)
- Find a local doctor, dentist, or pediatrician (even if just to register)
- Discover your closest beach, hiking spot, or weekend escape
- Learn about upcoming local holidays and traditions