

Junior Homestay Summer Programme (July only)

1. Standard Programme

Our junior homestay summer programme is run in St Tiernan's Community School, Balally, Dublin 16. This is a middle-class residential suburb near Dundrum Town Centre, one of the largest and most exclusive shopping malls in Europe and near the new tramline station which brings passengers to city centre in 20 minutes.

All students taking this programme will have morning classes from 09.30 to 13.30, with one coffee break and a shorter break in the classroom, on 5 mornings per week; 1 full day excursion each Monday; 2 afternoon excursions in city centre and 3 afternoon activities on campus along with 3 compulsory evening activities per week. All excursions are by private coach and the coaches are operated by the same family for the last 15 years. Irish monitors accompany students on all excursions and activities organized by Alpha.

The Centre has a Centre Manager and a Director of Studies. There is a prescribed syllabus for the junior programmes and the Director of Studies, in conjunction with the Alpha College Academic Manager, monitors the teaching team and ensures the academic quality of the programme. The levels are aligned to the CEFR (Common European Framework). The syllabus covers the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing as well as pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar activities. Classes are generally task-based and always interactive with students and teachers continually working together to improve language output. Class work includes individual, pair and group work, teacher-led discussions, debates, presentations, written tasks and listening exercises. All classes include topics on Irish history and culture. Mobile phones must be switched off during class times.

Students are tested on their first morning in school and placed in classes at appropriate levels. Maximum morning class size is 15. Each class prepares, with the class teacher, a small sketch or musical item and presents it to the whole school every second Saturday. Prizes are awarded to the best 3 classes.

Students are presented with an end of course report and certificate on completion of the course. The certificate includes the dates of study and the level of English studied.

All of our teachers have a primary degree and post-graduate EFL teacher training. Many of the teachers in our junior centre come back to us year after year and we have built up a strong core of widely experienced teachers.

We encourage our young learners to take an examination as part of their programme. Our examination of choice is the TIE (Test of Interactive English) which we believe is very appropriate for short-stay students. Students do not fail this test; they are scored at their language level and results are presented in Council of Europe (CEFR) level format. Further details on this examination may be found on www.acels.ie. We also prepare young learners for the Trinity Examination. On some of the afternoons when the campus activities are taking place we give students who are taking these examinations extra help to prepare for the examination. Alpha College should be informed as soon as possible of the name, date of birth and estimated English level of students wishing to take examinations

Full day excursions take place each Monday. The places visited on the full day excursion include Glendalough, Kilkenny, Irish for a Day, and cultural excursions outside of Dublin.

There are 2 half-day excursions per week. These include guided walking tours in city centre, visits to places like Kilmainham Gaol, Guinness, Powerscourt, the National Art Gallery, the National Museum of Ireland, GAA Museum, shopping etc.

The evening activities take place in the school from 7 – 9 p.m. on 2 or 3 evenings per week. Activities can be sports, video, karaoke, Irish dancing, and there is a disco in city center every second Wednesday. Students are brought to the disco by private coach.

We help leaders or teachers who accompany their students to organise other evening activities such as bowling, cinema, swimming etc.

The host families for juniors are located as near the school as possible. Almost all students are within walking distance of the school and many of the families who host them have been hosting junior students for us for many years. Our junior host family co-ordinator lives in the same area as the host families and meets them during the year on a regular basis. It is our policy to have students in little groups on roads or in estates so that they are never alone. In general we try to have the younger children as near to the school as we can but not all families are prepared to accept very young children. For this reason we do not accept students under 13 years of age in our host family school. Accommodation is on a full-board basis with a packed lunch during the day. Some special dietary requirements can be catered for – e.g. vegetarian or celiac requirements.

Most students are hosted in twin rooms. There is a small number of host families who have single rooms. If a student particularly wants a single room it is best to tell us about this as soon as possible and we will do our very best to make sure that he or she gets a single room. Only one student of a specific mother tongue is placed in a family, unless requested otherwise.

Students are given an ID card on arrival. This ID card contains the address and telephone number of their host family as well as emergency telephone numbers for key Alpha College personnel.

All junior students are met at the airport on arrival and returned to the airport on completion of their course. If students come without a leader they are checked in and left to the security checkpoint. Our representative will wait to see that they have gone through security.

Students are expected to obey school rules. The atmosphere in the junior summer school is relaxed and friendly but there is a code of discipline and students are expected to observe this code. Rules will be explained to them on their first day and are outlined in their handbook.

Smoking and the use of alcohol or drugs are strictly forbidden. Students found to be in breach of these regulations, or students who behave in an anti-social manner, e.g. shoplifting, bullying, aggressive behaviour, non-compliance with main school rules will be sent home. In such cases it is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to purchase a return flight ticket and receive the student in his/her home country.

2. Intensive Programme Option

Students who wish to take a more intensive academic option may take extra afternoon classes. They will attend the normal morning classes but instead of taking part in 2 of the afternoon campus activities they may take 2 x 2.5 hours classes in small groups – maximum class size 6. These classes will focus mainly on speaking and listening activities, unless there is a small group that wishes to concentrate on a specific aspect of language learning.

They will take part in all the excursions, evening activities and Saturday afternoon campus activities with the rest of the junior students.