



## Equinox Education Services



### - **Company Overview**

Founded in 2005, Equinox Education Services Ltd (EES) facilitates expert, impartial and independent study abroad programmes and cultural experiences for individuals, colleges and schools groups. Equinox's ethos is to deliver bespoke programming and experiences, which are tailor-made to their clients' specific needs and requirements within a safe and secure environment.

For example EES have been instrumental in facilitating groups as diverse as a touring Japanese High School Choir to Ireland<sup>1</sup>, marching bands, arts and crafts students, as well as conventional summer camp programmes in four different counties in Ireland. All of EES' activities place an emphasis on the importance of ongoing integration with local schools, Irish pupils and host families to further advance their clients English abilities EES' supervised field trips and recreational activities also contribute significantly to the local economy as well local and National tourism in Ireland.

Subject to the necessary investment and an ideal location, a long term goal for EES is to open its own cultural centre by 2019, thereby broadening the scope of its offerings to students coming to Ireland from all over the world.

### - **Mission Statement**

"Our mission is to deliver tailor-made learning and cultural experiences for groups and individuals and to promote internationalism through education and culture"

### - **Contact details**

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## Welcome and Introduction

On behalf of Equinox Education Services (EES) I would like to welcome your participation in our Host Family scheme. Being a host family with us is a unique, rewarding, fun and educational experience for all members of the family and an opportunity to create many unforgettable memories for our students. As an overriding principle for hosting, we ask families to remember to treat their own student as part of your family i.e. like you would your own family members.

You should use this guide as a reference tool for the simple dos and don'ts of your role and our expected standards. Good Luck!

**Noel Doyle**



**Managing Director**

## Why become a Host Family?



Picture for illustrative purposes only

When you are hosting a student or a visitor, you become an ambassador of our beautiful country. Irish people have a lot to offer and, as a host family you have an opportunity to show the world what Ireland really means.

Each year welcomes an increasing number of students from all over the world to our language centres in Carlow and beyond. It is therefore of utmost importance to the organisation that each student has individual care and attention so that they go home after their stay with us happy, satisfied and showing a marked improvement in their use of the English language.

We are very appreciative of the hospitality and friendliness our host families have shown students during the past years and are particularly pleased when families recommend us to their friends and neighbours. During our busy months and July in particular, we are in great need of good families. Also, as many of our students return to us year after year, it is especially rewarding when then ask to return to the same family.

We cannot stress often enough that it is family accommodation that we offer our overseas students – **where they will be welcomed as a member of that family and not as a mere lodger.**

Our students come to us on the understanding that they are to be part of an Irish family and they too must do their best to conform to that family's way of life. Students should not treat your house as a hostel – they also receive detailed notes on the dos and don'ts while living with an Irish family. A good general guideline for families would be to imagine how they would like their child to be treated if he/she went to live with a family abroad. The host families who show genuine friendliness and concern for their students' well-being are less likely to have problems and usually get considerable enjoyment from the experience of having an overseas student staying with them.

We hope the notes included in this booklet will not only help new families but will also refresh others on the many aspects that the commitments of acting as host families present. It is very important that all families read carefully through these notes. As usual, we will be only too happy to hear from you if you need further advice. We hope you will enjoy having your guest to stay this summer and that the experience will be a rewarding one.

## **Before the Student Arrives**

### **- Registering with EES**

Families wishing to accommodate a student may register with us by phoning our Office.

Our Homestay coordinator will then send you an application form, giving details of our requirements and asking for information about the accommodation you have to offer.

### **- Visits**

It is strict policy that all our families should be visited by our Homestay Coordinator prior to a student's arrival. A visit is obviously sensible, both for us as an organisation caring for foreign students and for you, so that you can discuss the commitment entailed by taking in student guests. After the first visit, most host families will thereafter be visited every other year, unless they are in regular contact with the Homestay Coordinator during the season. We promise our students clean, comfortable homes in a family atmosphere, where they will be provided with a good standard of hospitality. This is the assurance that the Homestay Coordinator will want when he / she comes to see you.

### **- Change of Address**

It is important that host families inform us of any change of address or telephone number.

### **- Processing Enrolments**

When we receive details of students attending our courses, the information is processed on our Enrolments database. The Coordinator then has the task of trying to place the right student with the right family.

In compliance with our Policy your profile information will be sent to the client on confirmation of their booking to allow us to match the student's profile carefully to the right host family and also to encourage pre arrival contact between yourself and the students.

EES will keep the following Personal Data: -

Name

Address

Contact Number

Partners Name

Children Ages/ Gender

Details of any pets

Room(s) available

Distance from school

Gender Preference

Financial Details: These are required to facilitate wire transfer payment for hosting. These details are stored in a secure locked location and are not shared with any third parties.

This information is the minimum ESS require to send to our clients and to facilitate our Academic and Cultural programmes. Please be assured that your Personal data is only sent to our partners overseas once you agree to host a particular student.

We work with overseas agents and educational institutions throughout the world some of whom are able to give us the names of students earlier than others. Some unfortunately, seem only to supply us with the student's names and addresses a week or two before the course starts. Then there are always last-minute applications to cope with! We know how important it is for you to receive your students name as soon as possible and appreciate how inconvenient it is for you when there are delays. However, we can assure you we do all we can in order to get this information from the agents. Please bear with us if there is a delay.

## Accommodation



Picture for illustrative purposes only.

The student must be provided with a nice clean room with basic, furniture such as:

- Comfortable bed (including linen, duvet cover, blanket and two pillows)
- Night table, lamp, and alarm clock/radio
- Work desk with chair and desk lamp with sufficient lighting. This can be in bedroom or in a quiet part of your home.

We require good sized twin-bedded and single rooms with adequate space for clothes, etc, No more than two students can share a room. We only make an exception to this rule in the case of a special request from students (friends, brothers, sisters) to be placed in the same house. Please note that we require family accommodation rather than lodging accommodation. During our summer and Easter programmes it is likely that there will be mixed nationalities and we therefore try to organise things in such a way that students from the same nationality are not in the same host family.

## **When the Students Arrive**

Irish families are kind, hospitable and do not need to be reminded of their responsibilities. However, we have set the following guidelines for all host families to adhere to, as we set guidelines for the student or visitor in order to facilitate the best homestay experience possible.

### **The Welcome**

First impressions are all-important! Please remember your student will be very eager to meet you, and anxious to feel that they will be happy with you during their stay.

### **Picking Up Your Student**

All families are asked to meet their visitor at the pick-up point (please make sure you know where this is- its likely to change from centre to centre.) You are also asked to deliver the student to the departure point at the end of their stay. It is also helpful when families can ensure their student arrives on time at coach park who leaving for an excursion. Those with no transport may be able to make arrangements with another nearby host family.

### **Delays**

If the plane/train/boat/bus is delayed, we do our best to inform you as soon as we have this information. We understand how tiresome it is waiting around without news. Please be assured that we do all in our power avoid this situation, but as most of you will know delays can be commonplace with seasonal air travel. Individual students travelling alone are often unable to inform their host family of their arrival time. We do however stress the importance of keeping their host family informed of all travel details whenever possible.

### **Food on Arrival**

Most students arrive tired, perhaps homesick and usually lost for words! Please offer them suitable food and drink according to the time of arrival.

### **First Day Practicalities**

Host families should write their name, address and telephone number for their student (although most students should arrive with this information to hand).

### **Getting to the Centre**

It is very important for the host families to show the students how to get to their Tuition Centre or School and how to return to their home. The students have a lot to cope with during the first few days and this sort of care is very helpful.

## The Programme (Summer Schools & Special Groups Only)

All host families should receive a copy of the student's daily programme, showing exactly what they will be doing each day, including morning classes, afternoon sports and excursions, discos and parties. Please ask for a programme if you are not given one when you pick up your student on arrival. All events are compulsory however, a wide choice of activities is usually offered once the course starts. Any student not knowing what they should be doing should always contact their Group Leader, Director of Studies or class teacher.

### Programme Changes

Students will inform you of any changes in their programme. Our teachers are asked to make the students write down the changes in case of confusion. We would be grateful if you could remind your student from time to time to inform you of all changes.

## Day to Day Care

### Food and Meals



Picture for illustrative purposes only.

You will appreciate that overseas students are usually going to find Irish food very different from their own, especially Asian students. Although this has been explained to the student as part of their preparation before arriving, it can still cause a problem. Most host families will ask their student on the first day to make a list of any specific dislikes and by mutual co-operation, any undue worry can be avoided. In the case of Japanese students, host families will receive a student profile before arrival.

Every day the host family must provide nutritious meals, mostly homemade. The meals, especially dinner, should be served in a family gathering and the student or visitor must feel welcome to the table at all times. Healthy snacks such as yogurt, fresh fruits, milk, juice, tea/coffee etc. need to be accessible to the student or visitor. No alcohol is to be offered to the student or visitor.

## GENERAL Terms and Conditions

1. The host family must make sure that the student has a quiet environment in order to study and succeed in school, as well as quiet time to sleep and rest.
2. The host family must speak English with, and while in the presence of, the student.
3. The host family is not allowed to lend any type of vehicle to the student or visitor
4. If the host family has any concerns that they cannot discuss directly with the student, please contact your Programme Coordinator or Accommodation Officer as soon as possible.
5. Homestay minors must not be left at home without adult host family member supervision.
6. Of course, no alcohol or illegal drugs to be offered to any students under any circumstances.
7. If a Homestay student accompanies their host family on holidays, outings, or trips, the host family must pay for accommodation and food. The student or leader must pay for his or her own travel arrangements, admission tickets, or personal expenses without first receiving written permission from EES. If the student will not join the host family, he or she must not be left alone.
8. Host families must be available for the full duration of the programme. If an emergency situation arises like family funeral etc host families must contact Program Coordinator / Accommodation Officer immediately.
9. The host family should familiarize students with the use of washer and dryer, so they can do their own laundry.
10. Upon a successful inspection by EES Accommodation office and all the relevant paper work you will be added to our host family database.
11. Families must ensure they do not accommodate other students of the same nationality during the period they are hosting for EES.
12. You can request to be removed from our host family database at any time.
13. Host family must explain to the student how to evacuate the home in case of an emergency. The home must have functioning fire smoke detectors on every floor.
14. All members of the family must be willing to accept and host a student. Please make sure that all members of your family agree and are not just going along with the idea of hosting a student. It is such a wonderful experience, but the student must be welcomed by everyone in your household, including your pet!
15. For the summer programs all students must be home by 9pm at the latest.
16. Students can only go to town after dinner under the supervision of their group leader .
17. While the student can be invited to attend religious services, the family should not apply any pressure to do so. The family should learn about the students' belief and culture and respect them. The family should always be willing to direct the student to his or her religion's place of worship if required. A host family must always respect the religious beliefs of the student.
18. The Program Coordinators / Accommodation Officer reserves the right to move the student if it is in the best interest of the student.
19. Termination of the Homestay provider agreement can happen in case of a breach of the Homestay agreement or the host family's guidelines and responsibilities.
20. Your confirmation letter will include details of any special arrangements required for any particular group e.g. special requirements for students transferring to/from school each day.
21. Any cancellations will be notified as soon as possible.
22. Host families are paid for actual nights hosting.
23. Equinox Education Services Ltd. does not allow any discrimination against students including negative comments on social media, all families who wish to host for Equinox Education Services Ltd must agree and comply with the above host family guidelines. Thank you for your time and we look forward to dealing with you.

Thank you for your time in reading this document and we look forward to working with you.