



ABINGDON

From the German Exchange Organiser: Alexandra Cardinal von Widdern

1 March 2022

Dear Parents/Guardians,

German Exchange 2022/23

Finally, we can begin again to organise the opportunity for all Germanists who are currently in the third, fourth and fifth year to participate in the exchange visit to Germany.

The exchange is the most important opportunity in a student's time at Abingdon to practise their German and learn about the culture in situ. The students acquire first-hand knowledge of the country whose language they are studying and the fluency and confidence many gain is an invaluable asset for life as well as IGCSE and 6th form study.

Great care is taken to place students with appropriate partners and families. Much of the time will be spent accompanied by members of Abingdon staff, either within the school or on group excursions. In addition, the students will spend a significant amount of time with their host family, when there will always be a member of our staff at the end of a telephone. Likely excursions include trips to the university town of Paderborn and the interactive Nixdorf Technology museum, the city of Dortmund and its interactive football museum, the local bouldering and climbing centre as well as team building activities with the German partner. The students will also spend time experiencing lessons at the host school. A highlight of the week is always the traditional England vs. Germany football match.

The German exchange is undertaken jointly with students from St Helen's School and our hosts in Germany are the students and their parents at the Ratsgymnasium, a highly reputable co-educational grammar school in Bielefeld. The link between the two English schools and the Ratsgymnasium has been firmly established for over 50 successful years. Partners will be the equivalent of our 4th year but we will aim to match the oldest and most mature with the older years. There is also the possibility to host a female exchange partner if you wish.

The dates are the following: The German party will be with us for ten days from Sunday 25 September to Wednesday 5 October 2022. The English party will be in Germany from Wednesday 8 February to Thursday 16 February 2023 which runs into the half term holiday. The cost of the exchange will be approximately £520 and includes all travel costs, excursions, and travel insurance*. The exact cost will depend on the number of participants, the exchange rate, flight prices and fuel taxes.

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Please note the specific travel requirements below and plan passport renewals, vaccinations and visa applications in good time.

I would like to stress that for this year only, the German exchange is open to students in their then fourth, fifth and sixth year at Abingdon (i.e. current third, fourth and fifth year students), as we are trying to give the year groups who lost out due to Covid a chance to participate. We hope that all will consider this opportunity. Please familiarise yourself with further details on travel, vaccination, insurance and hosting (DBS checks) below before completing the online form (link below) by **Monday 21 March** at the latest. Please note that you will need a copy of your child's passport which needs to be valid at least until 18 August 2023.

[Link](#) to online consent form (works best in Chrome browser)

Yours sincerely,

Alexandra Cardinal von Widdern

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MFL and German Exchange Co-ordinator
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***Additional information**

Current entry requirements into Germany (subject to change, please check up to date requirements [here](#))

Non-EU citizens living in the United Kingdom may only enter Germany if they are **fully vaccinated**. NHS and EU vaccination certificates are only valid for entry into EU countries for **nine months from the date of primary immunisation** (i.e. second vaccine dose) unless you have had a booster. Please note that your **final primary vaccination needs to have been administered at least 14 days before entering the country**.

Entry to some places in Germany may also require a LFT. We would liaise with host families in Germany to arrange these.

Required for travel:

- Proof of full vaccination (double) no less than 9 months old
- Passenger locator form

These are likely to have to be completed and uploaded to the Verify app or similar by parents/guardians in good time before departure.

Visas

Students who are neither UK nor EU nationals will likely need to apply for a visa. Please check with your embassy and arrange for those in good time.

Passports

Your child's passport must meet 2 requirements. It must be:

1. less than 10 years old
2. valid for at least 6 months after return

Insurance

The school will do their best to not commit financially before we need to in order to avoid loss in case of changes to travel regulations. The school insurance covers a number of cases but the situation is changing regularly.

Currently, these are the typical situations which are covered by our school insurance:

- FCDO advise against travel to our destination
- DfE advises against overnight stay in our destination
- Quarantine on arrival at our destination or on return would affect the trip
- Local/regional lockdown restricts the group's departure
- Social distancing or local rules affect the primary reason for our trip (e.g. schools and venues closed)

It is likely that a full refund for the cost of the trip will be available if the teacher in charge of the trip cancels the trip within 30 days before the departure due date for one of the reasons listed above. This will generally only apply to a full group cancellation. Individuals deciding not to travel, not meeting Germany's entry requirements, or not being able to travel would not always be eligible for any refund through the school insurance. Currently, this is therefore a risk you as parents would take or insure against. The School will always do its best to recover any payments made from its insurers and we hope the situation with regards to travel insurance and Covid will have improved dramatically by the time of the exchange.

In case of Covid whilst in Germany

In the event that your child falls ill, develops Covid symptoms or tests positive, you may be required to travel out to look after your child. The associated costs for travel and self-isolation would, at the time of writing, be covered by the School's insurance.

Commitment to full cost of the trip

Please note that by completing the online consent form (providing the trip proceeds) you are committing to the total cost of this trip being added to your July 2022 bill. The School will proceed to make bookings and reservations to procure the best possible deal; mindful of changes due to Brexit and potential disruption due to Covid, the school is taking all reasonable measures to limit the potential financial impact of cancellations or fluctuations in the exchange rate. Nonetheless it is not possible to eliminate all the risk. To be fair to all parties, as a precaution, rather than include extra contingency provisions which may not be required, the School reserves the right to vary the trip price for any unpaid elements of the trip, if at the date of final payment there has been a significant change in the Euro/£ exchange rate.

JBS during the German visit to Abingdon

Please also note that every effort will be made to accommodate your child and partner on the joint bus service during that time but JBS cannot guarantee this in advance. In rare cases in the past, they have offered an alternative route to some students.

DBS checks for host families in the UK

Due to government's update on Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) statutory guidance, the School is obliged to obtain a criminal records check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for all supervising adults (in most cases the parents or guardians) who are resident in the accommodation where the exchange student is to stay as part of a school organised trip. School will bear the cost of this DBS check and we will do all we can to facilitate the administration of the DBS checks.

In order to complete a DBS check, all supervising adults will need to make a 15-20 minute appointment to come into school to see the HR team by **Friday 24 June 2022**. The normal working hours of the HR team are 8.30am - 5.30pm Monday-Friday. This is to allow enough time for the check to be completed, as the completed DBS check must be received before the arrival of the German party for you to be allowed to host.

If you have any further questions about the DBS checks, please do not hesitate to contact either Mark Hindley (mark.hindley@abingdon.org.uk) or the HR Department (hr.team@abingdon.org.uk) whereas questions about the exchange should be addressed to me at alexandra.widdern@abingdon.org.uk

Should your child's passport require renewal, please upload a scan of the new passport to the online amendable form by Friday 24 June 2022 at the latest.