



### Update from Dinkelsbühl – Laura McEntee

I've been in Dinkelsbühl now for two months and I really love it! Since arriving here, I have experienced and learned so many new things in such a short period of time. I have visited a lot of different places, including Munich, Nördlingen, Nuremberg and Rothenburg ob der Tauber. Here are some pictures which I have added a picture for you to see! Can you guess where they are? Dinkelsbühl is a historic town in southern Germany with a population of around 11,500 people. It is a beautifully preserved town. There are lots of shops and restaurants with heated outdoor seating areas for tea, coffee, and food. I live in an old church which was renovated and turned into student accommodation. I have my own room which is very big, and I share a kitchen with the other students. There is a communal games room and a computer room; the food shops are very close, and everything is in walking distance. My room actually has space for three beds which is great when people come to visit and I have already had friends over to stay. There are many bigger and smaller differences between my hometown and Dinkelsbühl. One unexpected thing for me, was that, in Dinkelsbühl, many shops and restaurants actually don't accept cards. You have to use cash! This came as a complete surprise when I first arrived as I had really gotten used to just using Apple Pay for almost everything back home. When I first came to Dinkelsbühl, my friend from Ireland came to visit me and we went out to have dinner in the evening. When it came time to pay, we only had our bank cards and when we were told we couldn't use them, we were in a bit of a panic – not least, as there were no machines nearby to take out cash!

Luckily, the owner was kind, and we went back home to get cash – we were really grateful that he trusted us to come back and pay!

Teaching at the school has been great fun. All the students are very helpful and friendly. I teach Year 6 to Year 10, so the pupils are aged between 11 and 16-17. During the classes, I help with pronunciation and speaking exercises. I also help students tackle any grammar problems that come up either in class or at home when they were doing their homework. The school day here begins much earlier than at home. Classes start at 8.00am, but they end earlier too, so pupils have much more time to do other things outside of school. The classes are 45 minutes long and the flow of the day is a lot more relaxed than in Ireland. I think this has to do with the fact that there is less chaos in the corridors as, in this school, the teachers move around the school and the pupils stay in the classrooms. At the minute, masks are not required in the classroom for children although the teachers still wear masks and Covid antigen tests are carried out in school 3 mornings a week. When masks are required, you have to wear a medical-grade mask – cloth masks are not acceptable. While travelling around, I have had a couple of scary moments as not all buses have announcements of the upcoming stops. This makes travel feel a little bit stressful when you are unfamiliar with the area, and don't know where you are going! One day when I was on my way to meet my friend at Munich airport, I had to get the bus to Nördlingen train station. I knew I would be on the bus for around 30 minutes, but I wasn't sure when to get off as there was no announcement at all. Luckily, the bus driver was kind enough to let me know when I had to get off as I really would have missed my stop. There isn't a train station in Dinkelsbühl, so when travelling by train you have to take the bus or car to the nearest station.

I am really looking forward to Christmas here in Dinkelsbühl and I'm already excited about going to the Christmas markets – I just hope the pandemic doesn't interfere. There is a large Christmas market in Nuremberg. All the Christmas decorations and cabins were already put up in October in order to prepare for the season!! Every time I see them, I get more and more excited. Lebkuchen and Glühwein here I come 😊

At Hallowe'en, I was lucky enough to travel back to Ireland to help a group of students from my school who were preparing to begin a work placement in Ireland. It was interesting to see Ireland through their eyes and to see the things that they found disorienting (travelling by public transport!!) and charming. I helped to give them a tour around town, and we visited Trinity College and St Stephen's Green. We even made it into the local paper in Dinkelsbühl with the Irish flag which was fun! It was really nice to be home for a short while, but it's great to be back too!