



ALBANIAN COLLEGE

Early Years Handbook

Table of Contents

Albanian College Mission, Vision, and Values	2
Early Years Philosophy	2
Message from Administration	2
Early Years Curriculum Information	3
• Curriculum Overview	3
• Early Years Structure and Teachers	3
• How the Environment Supports Learning	3
• Assessment in the Early Years	4
• Rest Time	4
• Supporting Your Child's Transition to School	4
• Parent Involvement and Assistance	5
• Arrivals and Departures	6
• Attendance and School Hours	6
• English Language Acquisition	6
• Early Years Behaviour Policy	6
• Homework Policy	7
• Field Trips	7
• Birthday Parties	7
• Food	7
General Policies and Procedures	8
• Admissions Procedures	8
• Admissions Requirements	9
• Bus Service and Transportation	10
• Clothing	10
• Toys	10
• Emergency Contact Information	11
• Health and Medical	11
• Calendar	12
• School Office Contact	12

Albanian College Mission, Vision, and Values

School Mission

The Mission of Albanian College is to create a positive, holistic, inquiry-based learning environment that embraces the uniqueness and attributes of each member of the school community. Each student will be empowered with the ability and desire to be a knowledgeable, responsible and internationally-minded citizen.

Vision

Albanian College aims to develop young people who are intelligent, creative, compassionate and forthright, who have ownership of their learning and demonstrate leadership. The school aims to transform teaching and learning in Albania.

Values

Albanian College is committed to the development of each student as a whole person, their human relationships and their place within the community and the wider world.

To further this goal, Albanian College aims to educate students:

- to value each person's identity
- to take charge of their own lifelong learning processes
- to use their creativity to inquire, explore and innovate
- to be willing and able to collaborate with others, including in a leading role
- to recognise their responsibility towards themselves, others and the environment

Early Years Philosophy

It is during our earliest years that a large part of the pattern for our future adult life is set. We acknowledge that positive early years experiences give children the best start in life. Our Early Years Program focuses on supporting children to achieve their full potential by developing social skills, self-awareness and respect, emotional skills, language, literacy, numeracy skills, and group-work through work and play. It focuses on self-esteem and confidence that will make your child Primary-School ready.

Message from the Leadership Team

Albanian College is excited to offer our Early Years Programme to students aged 3-6 years old. We believe that laying a solid educational foundation and instilling a love of learning in our students will help them become successful for years to come. We have hired Early Years teachers who are both caring and nurturing, as well as highly-qualified. We welcome you to talk with our Director, Head of Primary School, and the Early Years Teachers about our Early Years Programme.

Early Years Curriculum Information

Curriculum Overview

The Early Years curriculum is concept based and taught using an inquiry-based, transdisciplinary approach. Students are introduced to units of inquiry that are focused on a particular transdisciplinary theme. Early Years 1 and 2 complete four units per year, while Early Years 3 completes six units per year. Subjects such as English Language, Albanian Language, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Music, Visual Arts, Theatre Arts, and Physical Education are integrated as much as possible into the content of the units. The Early Years curriculum is play-based and does not rely on worksheets or textbooks. In addition to the content taught, students are taught transdisciplinary skills such as social skills, self-management skills, communication skills, thinking skills, and research skills. To this end, we aim to foster the students' independence by encouraging them to communicate, collaborate, and take ownership of their own behaviour.

Early Years Structure and Teachers

- Early Years 1: 3 years of age as of established cut-off date*
 - One foreign teacher and one Albanian assistant teacher per class
- Early Years 2: 4 years of age as of established cutoff date
 - One foreign teacher and one Albanian assistant teacher per class
- Early Years 3: 5 years of age as of established cutoff date
 - One foreign teacher and one Albanian assistant teacher per class
- Single-Subject Classes
 - Performing Arts
 - Visual Arts
 - Physical and Health Education (PHE)
 - Albanian Language

*As this date changes annually, Albanian College uses 15 October and/or the start of the Albanian government school year as the cut-off date for enrollment.

In certain individual cases, a student may audit an Early Years grade level with approval from the Executive Director.

How the Environment Supports Learning

The physical environment supports learning in a variety of ways. The size and arrangement of classroom furniture is age-appropriate and designed with safety in mind. In addition, there are specific areas within the classroom, such as dramatic play and art areas, that are established to guide children in their play. We believe that using open-ended materials supports individual and social play; stimulates imagination and inquiry; and encourages natural exploration of a child's environment. In order to provide a comfortable environment

that promotes responsible use of classroom resources, we introduce learning materials gradually and in a progressive sequence.

Assessment in the Early Years

Assessment at this age is primarily observational data collected by the teacher. Teachers are constantly interacting with and observing their students for evidence of mastery of specific skills taught in the classroom. All students will have a portfolio of their work, including teacher observations, photos, and teacher and student reflections. As students develop at different rates, we grade on a continuum. Students receive three (3) reports per year and have three conferences between teachers and parents.

Rest Time

All Early Years students are provided rest or quiet time daily, depending on their age. Young students need time daily to rest and recharge from the day's activities. It is not required that they sleep, however, they do need to lay quietly on their cots.

- Early Years 1 Students rest for one and one half hours (90 minutes)
- Early Years 2 Students rest for one hour (60 minutes)
- Early Years 3 Students rest/have quiet time for approximately 30 minutes

During rest time, staff will ensure:

- Children are properly supervised
- Children's beds are not touching
- Bedding is not covering children's faces
- Quiet music/stories are playing
- Beds are clean and in good order

The school provides sheets, however parents are welcome to send in additional blankets, a pillow, and a soft comfort item, if necessary.

Supporting Your Child's Transition to School

Starting school is a lifelong journey, and it may be a challenge at first. The transition from home to school can be overwhelming for some children in the beginning. It is normal for children to be upset the first days or weeks of school when parents leave. All children react differently and become comfortable at varying times.

Some Tips to Support Your Child's Transition

- Be positive about school. If you are excited about school, they will be too!
- Help your child to be as independent as possible. Your child will gain a sense of accomplishment from doing things on his/her own.

- Assure your child that you will be back for him or her at the end of the day.
- Please do not prolong the goodbye process. A quick kiss and “See you later!” is all they need. Make sure to say goodbye, rather than just leaving. Your child needs to see you leaving, as he/she may become nervous or scared if they do not.
- Please be punctual when collecting your child, as they can be very distressed if you are late.

What to Bring

- A reusable water bottle labeled with your child’s name
- A backpack that is clearly labeled with your child’s name
- A pair of hard-soled indoor shoes that children can take on and off independently
- A spare set of clothes, including underwear, in a labeled bag to keep at school in case a change is necessary
- For Physical Education (PE) classes, children need to wear the school’s PE kit as well as comfortable sport shoes. Students may wear sport pants as well.
- Bedding (pillow, blanket, and soft comfort item, if needed) for EY1 and EY2 students only.

Parent Involvement and Assistance

A child will absorb information more rapidly during Early Years than at any other time in his/her life. Your role as a parent is crucial since their learning is influenced by the home environment. By creating a partnership between home and school, we can provide a supportive and stimulating environment where your child can develop at his/her own rate.

Encouraging independence and responsibility will greatly enhance children’s self esteem and independence. In addition to the items below, it is beneficial for children to do basic household chores, such as setting the table and tidying up afterwards. Some areas for independence include:

- Dress and undress themselves
- Feed themselves
- Behave at the table
- Blow his or her nose
- Use and flush the toilet
- Wash his or her hands

Encourage positive attitudes towards school and learning. You can help by talking with your child about school: asking open-ended questions; encouraging your child to ask questions and to wonder; reading stories together; providing your child with a variety of writing materials; playing simple board and card games together; giving your child opportunities to use technology in a constructive way; and providing opportunities for your child to interact with other children in different environments.

Arrivals and Departures

Instruction begins at 08:00, so children may arrive between 07:45 and 07:55 every day. At the end of the day, if anyone other than you will collect your child, please notify the school office in writing by 12:00. This is for the safety of your child. At the end of the school day, for bus riders, we offer supervised play time until 14:15 three days per week. Please, try to be punctual at the end of each day. It can be very unsettling for a child to wait. If you are late, please inform the school by calling the Main Office.

Attendance and School Hours

School hours are from 07:45 to 15:20, depending on the campus; AC Tirana ends at 15:20, while Durres ends at 15:15. Since formal instruction begins at 08:00, all students should be in the classroom by that time. Our Early Years programme requires constant dedication and attendance. Young children find it easier to build and sustain a range of social relationships when they attend school on a consistent basis. Children are more likely to gain confidence and feel good about themselves when they regularly attend school. Due to the nature of our programme, teachers are not able to give “make-up work” when students are absent. Please communicate all absences to your child’s teachers and to the school’s office.

English Language Acquisition

It is during the Early Years Stage where children absorb the most, therefore, English acquisition comes almost naturally for these young learners. Our philosophy is based on creating an environment of trust, love, and respect where the students feel safe to start producing English. Students are immersed in English, as teachers and teacher assistants communicate with the students in English all day (except for Albanian Language class). There is sufficient research to show that students learn an additional language best when their mother-tongue language is also supported. To that end, we ask that you continue to develop your mother-tongue language at home by speaking and reading to your child in your language. As students transition into using more English at school, we will support their mother-tongue language less in the classroom, but Albanian instruction will continue at regularly-scheduled times.

Early Years Behaviour Policy

Early childhood is a time when children are learning to manage their emotions and behaviours appropriately. All children will display undesirable behaviour at some time. To help children learn how to manage their behaviour, teachers will use positive guidance and discipline. Positive guidance and discipline techniques help children learn self-control, independence, responsibility, and respect.

Teachers will:

- Have expectations for children that are reasonable and age-appropriate

- Redirect play
- Set acceptable and consistent limits
- Offer choices
- Model and use positive reinforcement
- Validate children's feelings and help find solutions to problems

Albanian College also recognizes that the best way to manage children's behaviour is through consistency and communication with parents. Children's learning and behaviour will be communicated with parents frequently.

Homework Policy

We do not send homework in Early Years, as it is not developmentally appropriate. We encourage parents to read stories to their children every day and provide materials to continue developing their fine and gross motor skills like cutting, coloring, pasting, hand/eye coordination, etc.

Field Trips

Our programme includes out-of-school field trips according to the Unit of Inquiry being studied. A special permission form will be sent to you containing all the information about each field trip, which will have to be signed and returned to the school.

Birthday Parties

If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday with the class, please discuss this at least one week in advance with your child's teacher. Birthdays can be celebrated at school during a short period of time arranged with the teacher, typically at the end of the day. Full birthday parties are not allowed at school during school time. These can be arranged privately at an off campus location. We also do not allow for outside guests or entertainment of any kind.

You are welcome to mark your child's special day by bringing in a snack or cake. No nuts are allowed at Albanian College for reasons of health and safety. This includes nut-based products, like peanut butter, whole nuts, such as peanuts or walnuts or that contain flour that may contain nut residue. Some children have severe allergies to nut products and it is required that all parents adhere to this regulation with regard to birthday snacks and cakes, as well as any food sent from home.

Food

Students have breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack daily. We expect our students to be independent while eating. Please encourage this behaviour at home, too. The school offers a large variety of healthy and nutritious food, which includes fruit, vegetables, rice, pasta, and meat. Encourage your child to expand his/her range of food by providing similar options

at home. Please do not send cans, glass bottles, sweets, or chocolates to school. Additionally, there is no sharing of food allowed.

Sample Menu

Breakfast: Fruit (banana, strawberry, apple, kiwi), cheese, bread, butter, and jam, milk

Lunch: Vegetable soup, rice, yoghurt, chicken fillet, salad (cucumber, tomatoes, cheese, lettuce)

Snack: Yogurt or fruit

Admissions Procedures

The vision of Albanian College is to transform teaching and learning in Albania. Our mission is to create knowledgeable, responsible and internationally-minded citizens. The focus of Albanian College admissions is a student's ability to be academically successful. Albanian College does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, nationality, religion, mother tongue, or social or cultural background. Albanian College is officially licensed by the Albanian Ministry of Education.

Aims

Albanian College aims to:

- Admit qualified students who will contribute positively to and enrich the educational community on a first-come-first-serve basis.
- Implement thorough, fair, and balanced admissions procedures.
- Communicate clearly with applicant families through the admissions and enrolment processes.
- Accept as many students as we are capable of meeting the needs of within the established programmes and facilities.
- Recognise the importance of and embrace the diversity of students' background, talents, skills, and viewpoints.
- To maintain a system of rolling admissions throughout the academic year, space permitting.

Essential Agreements

Albanian College commits to:

- Maintain class sizes to 22 or fewer students per section and that, when the limit is reached, additional staffing will be sought to accommodate the creation of additional sections.

- Process applications and provide feedback on admissions decisions to families in a timely manner.
- Respectfully communicate admissions decisions.
- Respect confidentiality of applicants.
- Safely return any original documentation to the applicant’s parents/guardians.
- Treat all applicants equally.
- Provide opportunities for all enrolled students to pursue studies at the IB Diploma Level.
- Ensure that all class sections are well-balanced with regards to student needs, gender, personalities, and other factors.
- Work in partnership with parents/guardians to support students reaching their full potential.

Parents/guardians and students who are enrolled commit to:

- Upholding the school’s mission and values (see Mission Statement).
- Working in partnership with the school to address student needs and offer support, including academic and behavioural support, as needed.
- Communicating with the school in a respectful and responsible manner.
- Continually striving to embody the attributes of the Learner Profile (see *IB Learner Profile*, 2013).

Admissions Requirements

Age (before established cutoff date*)	Year Group
3	EY 1
4	EY 2
5	EY 3

*As this date changes annually, Albanian College uses 15 October for the Early Years and/or the start of the Albanian government school year as the cut-off date for enrollment.

In certain individual cases, a student may audit an Early Years grade level with approval from the Executive Director.

Early Years 1 (EY1) Students

General Requirements

Students in EY1 will be admitted after the submission of all application documents and proof of tuition payment. Additionally, all students in EY1 should participate in a personal interview with admissions staff to ensure the school is able to meet their academic and physical needs. There is no English-language requirement for EY1, but children will be interviewed in

Albanian to determine their level of language development. It is recognised the students may speak no English upon enrollment in this grade.

By the first day of school students must be able to:

- Use the toilet unassisted. No child should ever be brought to school in a nappy or diaper nor should they need one during naptime.
- Use a fork and spoon to eat independently.
- Enjoy and be willing to try a range of foods, including soup, fish, meat, and fruit. Any special dietary needs that are exceptional need to be presented in the form of a paediatric doctor's note to the school. These must be medically related. If dietary requirements are beyond the means of the school, a student's admission may be denied. If there are religiously inappropriate foods, please communicate this to school administration during registration.
- Hold and use a cup with no handle.
- Take off and put on Velcro fastening shoes.
- Attempt to take off and put on a jumper and coat.

Early Years 2 (EY2) through Grade 3

General Requirements

Students in EY2 through Grade 3 will be admitted after the submission of all application documents and proof of tuition payment. Additionally, all students in these grades should participate in a personal interview with admissions staff to ensure the school is able to meet their academic and physical needs. There is no English-language requirement for EY2 through Grade 3. It is recognised the students may speak no English upon enrollment in these grade levels.

Bus Service and Transportation

Transportation will be provided for Early Years students for an extra fee. A Teaching Assistant, together with the school bus driver, will pick them up every morning and drive them back home. The school's office will arrange all transportation details. Please direct any questions regarding transportation to the school's office.

Clothing

Students should wear a clean Albanian College uniform every day. They should wear shoes that are comfortable, easy to put on (Velcro), and appropriate for sport activities. All uniforms must be labeled with your child's name.

Toys

We discourage children from bringing personal toys to school. Toys can be easily lost or broken, causing distress for the owners. Children are never allowed to bring toys such as plastic knives, swords, and guns to school, as we wish to encourage positive cooperative and creative play. Toys may be allowed on special occasions with prior permission from your child's teacher.

Emergency Contact Information

Please notify the school's Main Office and your child's teachers immediately if there are any changes to your phone number, email address, or home address.

Health and Medical

It is the responsibility of Albanian College to provide sick or injured students with adequate care and attention until parents, guardians, or designated caregivers can take charge of the students' well-being. The teacher and/or school doctor will provide assistance to sick or injured students on school premises when necessary.

In the event of non-emergency sickness or accident, the student's parent, guardian, or designated caregiver will be notified and requested to provide transportation to the home or treatment center. If the parent, guardian, or designated caregiver cannot be contacted, the student shall be cared for in the school doctor's office.

In cases when a student has a fever, has vomited, has had diarrhea, or displays signs of any communicable illness, including lice, the parent, guardian, or designated caregiver will be contacted and will be informed that the child must return home immediately.

Students who are ill should not be sent to school as they pose a health risk to other students. Any child who has vomited, had diarrhea, or has had a fever must recover for 24 hours before returning to school. With more serious illnesses, the school may require parents to submit a physician's note to the school doctor before a student returns to school.

Calendar

School Office Contact

Albanian College Durrës

Address:

Rruga "Anastas Durrsaku"

Durrës 2001

Albania

Website: www.acdurrese.edu.al

Tel: 052200171

Email: info@acdurres.edu.al

Albanian College Tirana

Address:

Rruga "Dritan Hoxha," Nr. 1

Tirana 1000

Albania

Website: www.actirana.edu.al

Tel: 044513471

Email: info@actirana.edu.al