



Thomas Russell Junior School

A school transformed from the ordinary. An expectation of excellence. Relentless drive to improve. (Ofsted 2014)



Headteacher Mrs S Sharpe
Deputy Headteacher Mrs G Gahagan

Dear Parents / Carers,

Residential Visits



At Thomas Russell Junior School we are passionate about learning and providing a high quality education, but we also strongly recognise that school is about developing the whole child, not just academic standards. For this reason we offer a whole host of wider opportunities to children aimed at promoting self-confidence, independence, teamwork and nurturing individual well-being.



Our programme of residential visits is very well received by children and parents and is recognised as a key element in the broader development of children. We are fully supportive of these experiences, and whilst an overwhelming majority of feedback is exceptionally positive, we also have to be mindful of comments we receive regarding costs and length.



Our three-class structure for Maths and English (enabling us to teach the children in groups of approximately 20) is incredibly beneficial and a luxury to which we are passionately committed, but is also expensive! As school (and home) budgets are decreasing, we are having to look for more creative ways of providing the best possible opportunities for our children. Since we began using Whitemoor Lakes and PGL residential centres we have seen their costs almost double. In an attempt to minimise increases in costs to families, we have found ourselves subsidising more and more towards residential visits. Our decreased school budget no longer allows us to subsidise so significantly. However, we have not seen anywhere the increase in costs at SCC centres, and have therefore made the decision to utilise their range of facilities to meet all of our residential needs this year and going forward on a rolling programme to include Laches Wood, Chasewater and Standon Bowers.



In addition to the financial aspects, we are aware that whilst some children (and families) coped very well with five days away from home in Y5, others found this more difficult and quite a leap up from one night away the previous year. Additionally it was suggested that Y6 children might be able to more fully enjoy both activities if JTHS transition days and our residential visit were in different weeks.



For these reasons, and in consultation with Parent Forum and Governors, we have made some changes to our Residential programme for the coming year:

- Y4 will have the opportunity to attend a 2 day / 1 night residential at Chasewater from Monday 12th March to Tuesday 13th March which will cost £65, including coach travel, all meals, activities and insurance.
- Y5 will have the opportunity to attend a 4 day / 3 night residential at Chasewater from Tuesday 13th March to Friday 16th March which will cost £125, including coach travel, all meals, activities and insurance.
- Y6 will have the opportunity to attend a 3 day / 2 night residential at Standon Bowers from Wednesday 11th July to Friday 13th July which will cost £145, including coach travel, all meals, activities and insurance.

It is our intention next year that the new Y4 and Y5 will share a week at Laches Wood, thus keeping costs down and meaning children visit 3 different centres during their time at Thomas Russell Junior.

Children not wishing to attend a residential visit will be catered for in school. We would also expect that attendance at residential visits would only be possible if behaviour in school demonstrated consistent ability to meet expected standards. We are able to offer a savings programme and some financial assistance to those in receipt of certain benefits and as ever would not wish to exclude any child on a financial basis but can only go ahead with such visits if sufficient funds are received into school.

Further detailed information, including permission slips and payment information will be circulated soon. We hope that explaining the rationale behind our decisions helps parents to understand why changes have been necessary and we really look forward to accompanying your children on these visits.

Best wishes

Mrs S Sharpe
Headteacher

