



Jim Underhill
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Dear Parent,

Thank you for the recent deposit confirming your child's commitment to our proposed Gold Duke of Edinburgh canoe expeditions. I am now coordinating this section of the award, so would like to offer some more details regarding the plans now set for their expedition section of the award.

Because the group have decided to opt for an expedition that requires skills beyond that of a walking group, their essential Canoe Skills Course will take place during the up-coming October expedition days from Wednesday 19th October to Friday 21st October. We will leave College each day at 8.45am to drive to Frankwell, Shrewsbury where qualified instructors from Drummond Outdoor will use the days to offer basic water safety, canoe skills and advice on expedition planning; hopefully culminating in a short river trip down to Atcham bridge on Friday 21st. As Drummond Outdoor will be providing all the necessary canoe equipment, all students will require is a spare set of clothes, a towel and appropriate clothes in which to canoe in. I will brief all pupils about this in more detail before we travel.

Once the basic training has been completed, we then plan to run the practice expedition at the beginning of the Easter holidays (1st – 4th April), giving pupils the chance to experience a full river trip before their final Summer Expedition. This practice is a necessary requirement of the Gold award and any pupil who misses will then have to use the summer trip as their practice. This Easter trip will require the group to navigate down an upper section of the River Severn with three overnight camping stops at designated campsites alongside the river. Once again, pupils will be briefed fully about our expectations regarding their planning for this trip during the Lent term and the fine details regarding kit, food and personal equipment will largely be down to them; as should be expected at this level of the award. All transport will be provided by the College.

Finally, we plan to run the final expedition on the impressive River Wye from Sunday 24th June to Thursday 28th June, during which the group will navigate down sections of the river, again stopping overnight on sites that will have been booked in advance. During this trip, students will be required to be fully self-sufficient, taking all their personal kit in their canoes with them. Their camp craft during the evening will also be assessed as part of the overall expectations of the trip. Therefore, we will use Thursday afternoon sessions after Easter in College to offer pupils both the time and guidance so that they can be fully prepared for the culmination of their efforts – and can also offer tents and cooking equipment.

The obvious caveat regarding any canoe expedition is that the dates outlined above may be liable to change due to either river being too flooded to navigate safely. Although hopefully unlikely, it is worth raising the possibility so that all involved are aware that expedition dates may have to be altered or – in the worst case scenario – delayed until later in the year. Because we would only pay Drummond Outdoor on what they have provided, it is unlikely that any cancellation would result in the loss of money to those funding the trips. It is also worth saying that the majority of the detail regarding planning will be the responsibility of the pupils themselves, reflecting the award's intent to foster independence, determination and organisation. However, if you have any concerns or queries regarding what I have sketched out here (or further questions during the course of the year) please do not hesitate to call me at College or email me at jim.underhill@ellesmere.com.

Finally, pupils are currently working on their other sections of the Gold award with most now assuming full responsibility for organising which skill, volunteering activity, physical activity and residential trip they want to complete. These sections of the course can, in the case of those not qualified at Silver level, take up to eighteen months to complete so early starts are essential. Most are fully engaged on Thursday afternoons in a range of activities spanning Lower School Coaching, Archery and Cooking but, by its nature, they will also have to use time outside of College hours to complete the various sections. We will have sessions every half term on the www.dukeofedinburgh.co.uk website so that pupils can up-load and track their progress in the various elements of the course, so I am mentioning the site in order that you may choose to enquire as to their progress and involvement too. The prevailing ethos at Gold level is that students should be motivated and independent enough to sort, complete and get all of the sections (apart from the expedition) signed off but, as previously suggested, we will monitor every half term to see how they are progressing.

I hope this helps to clarify some outstanding points and gives enough of an overview regarding the proposed expeditions.

Yours sincerely,



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