



Date : 5th October 2017

Ref : KJM T018

TO ALL PARENTS OF PUPILS IN P6 AND P7

Dear Parents/Carers,

SCHOOL TRIP

As you are aware, during the recent consultation held with all parents, the decision was made to keep the cycle of mainland residential trips to every two years and to change the target group to Primary 6 and 7 pupils.

On Monday night, at Tolsta Primary School Parent Council the subject of school trips was on the agenda and those parents in attendance engaged with staff in a positive discussion about mainland residential trips. For the benefit of those who were not in attendance I would just like to outline a number of points which were made at that time.

Schools are encouraged to offer senior pupils the experience of a residential trip. However, there is no requirement on school staff in the islands to take children to the mainland. This minimum requirement could be covered with a one-night trip for pupils to the Scaladale centre in Harris. The Director of Education has been looking at this option and actively working with the staff in Scaladale in a bid to ensure that every pupil at some point in their primary life would have this experience. We would hope that sometime in the near future that this would become part of a primary child's experience either during their middle primary (P4-5) or upper primary (P6-7) years.

Before school trips can be organised, school staff must be willing to undertake the responsibility that comes with taking pupils away on a residential school trip. I am pleased to say that the staff in Tolsta Primary School **are** willing to undertake a mainland residential school trip. However no member of staff is willing to lead a trip beyond Scotland's borders and so any trips which are organised will be within mainland Scotland.

In what is for many families, a tough financial climate it is incumbent on staff in the school, when organising school trips to ensure that there is no unnecessary wastefulness of resources. We must endeavour to provide value for money whilst still providing an excellent experience for the children and without putting additional pressure on families to pay large sums of money out on school trips, especially when there are families who may have more than one child in attendance.

School staff, when organising school trips must look at the kinds of experiences pupils will have when away with the school. Generally speaking there are two kinds of trip. The first is of a cultural nature, e.g. a visit to a city and a programme of events to be undertaken whilst there. There is no doubt that Glasgow, Edinburgh, Stirling and Inverness would offer much for children to do and see. However, these visits present additional costs to the school. A bus and driver would need to remain with the school party throughout the week and fuel, accommodation and subsistence costs also need to be made for the driver.

The second kind of trip is to spend the days away at an outdoor centre, at which children would engage in a wide range of team building and confidence building activities with other children who are resident at the centre during the course of their stay. As the children are resident there are no additional costs to be borne for transport or for accommodation for a bus driver.





In the past pupils from Tolsta Primary School have engaged in both kinds of trip, though in recent years, time spent at Fairburn Outdoor Centre near Maryburgh has been a popular choice for pupils, parents and staff. However Fairburn is relatively expensive, and my understanding is that the parental contribution for pupils the last time Tolsta Primary School visited in 2016 was £100 with the **total cost per child being approximately £300**.

The view of school staff is that taking pupils to an outdoor centre is the preferred option. The children are resident at the centre for the duration of their stay and there is less likelihood of children becoming separated from the group than when on a cultural trip. There are no transport issues and children receive a set of experiences that most of them would not receive with their families. It is the feeling of staff that many of the children have already visited the major cities within Scotland and would therefore have undertaken many of the activities on offer there.

Bearing all of these factors in mind, I am writing to you at this time in my capacity as the Shared Head Teacher of Tolsta Primary School and Sgoil a' Bhac with a proposal for parents of P6-7 pupils to consider.

Having spoken at length with my colleague Donna Macdonald, Principal Teacher at Sgoil a' Bhac, we would like to suggest a joint trip for the pupils in the two schools, comprising the thirteen P7 pupils from Sgoil a' Bhac and the fifteen P6-7 pupils from Tolsta Primary School and we would propose taking the children to Alltnacriche Outdoor Centre near Aviemore. The reasons for this proposal are as follows:

- Alltnacriche has an excellent and long track record as an outdoor centre being one of a number of outdoor centres within Scotland which are managed by Scripture Union Scotland and having been in operation since 1987.
- In terms of cost effectiveness, Alltnacriche offers better value for money than Fairburn. The total cost for Sgoil a' Bhac pupils who attended last year and which included transport costs and accommodation as well as the activities being offered throughout the week amounted to approximately £160 – almost half the price of the cost of Fairburn.
- We have been unable to secure availability for Fairburn during Summer Term of session 2017-18. However we have been able to secure availability for both schools in Alltnacriche in June 2018 should parents agree with the proposal.
- As with Fairburn, the kinds of programmes which Alltnacriche offers to school groups are all linked to Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes and have had suitable risk assessments carried out.
- As many outdoor centres seek to be full to capacity, it is likely that whichever outdoor centre our pupils would go to, they would be in attendance there with pupils from another school. We feel it is better to forge good relationships between the children of Tolsta and Back as they are neighbouring schools and under the same headship. We also feel that there have over many years been strong links between the families of Tolsta and Back and that this would be a good opportunity to bring the children from both communities together.
- This would offer a good experience of developing the relationships being built between the pupils from Tolsta and Back and would certainly be a helpful and useful transition experience, particularly for pupils in Primary 7 as they prepare to leave both Tolsta and Back and move on to the Nicolson Institute.
- As Miss Wemyss is a probationer teacher and this would be her first experience of organising a residential school trip, we feel it would be of benefit to her to do so with her mentor Donna Macdonald and to not have the total burden of responsibility for this.





Bearing this proposal and the reasons for it in mind, I would be grateful if parents would now consider the information contained within this letter and complete the attached slip and return it to the Tolsta School office by Wednesday 11th October 2017. Once slips are back in school staff will be able to begin planning for a school trip and the Parent Council can be approached for assistance with fundraising ventures.

Leis gach durachd,

Kirsteen J. Maclean
Head Teacher

NAME: _____

PARENT OF : _____ CLASS: _____

Please tick the appropriate box to indicate your choice and return this form to the school office by Wednesday 11th October 2017

I would be willing for my child to go on a joint residential school trip with pupils from Sgoil a’Bhac to Alltnacriche Outdoor Centre in June 2018.

I would not be willing for my child to go on a joint residential school trip with pupils from Sgoil a’Bhac and would prefer that staff from Tolsta Primary School explored alternative options.



