



Tuesday 22nd October, 2024

Dear Parents

I have been made aware that there are still some concerns over the decision to go ahead with the **Heatree Activity Centre** and I am also aware of a social media post regarding this and I feel that it may be useful to address these concerns in further detail and reassure you about this decision.

I looked into this in a lot of detail before making the decision but I have spoken again at length with the centre this morning to re-affirm that my due diligence was correct, which I have confirmed.

Firstly, this centre is not the “*extreme Christian Bible camp*” that one parent has very falsely stated on social media. It is run by a Christian organisation but the religious elements covered are focussed on the ethos and values in line with school assembly themes. These are presented during the visit as a “Thought for the day” and can be reflected on in a nonspiritual way. The Christian viewpoint is not enforced. However, during these short sessions, the centre is organised for some children to step out from the discussions in the same way that they would step out of the RE curriculum lessons in school. It is not unusual for this to happen and alternative provision is in place should this be the case. So, in my view, this experience would still be inclusive for children of different faiths or beliefs.

Please be clear that this residential wasn't cancelled last year, it was postponed. The staff were at the time dealing with the absence of the Headteacher and all the challenges that presented and when feelings began to run high about this trip, the decision was made to postpone to allow time to reflect on the choice (despite visiting the centre previously on two occasions) and ensure it was still appropriate.

It has also been stated on social media that this location isn't on the Local Authority's approved list; with all of our residential trips, we follow a statutory process where trip proposals are reviewed by the Education Outdoors team at the Local Authority to gain authorisation (also part of the school's due diligence) and this was granted.

The statement on the website “life changing encounters with God” (also mentioned on social media) has been taken out of context, this relates to the beauty of the natural surroundings where the centre is located. The team explained that the natural surroundings are used to promote a sense of ‘mindfulness’ in terms of being peaceful, still and reflective – the connection can be a spiritual one for those children who are Christian but it is presented as ‘being mindful’ and the connection made is up to the individual.

In terms of our visit to Heatree, the staff at the centre and our staff will work together (nearer the time) to plan what themes and activities we would like to include so that it is bespoke for our setting and the centre will send the materials in advance, which we can share with you if you want to have more detail.

As I stated in my original letter, we are utilising this visit as a way of supporting the RE and PSHE curriculum in a more lived experience but mainly to give the children an exciting and

enjoyable outdoor learning experience by taking part they in a range of activities (e.g. climbing, bush craft, archery etc.).

The residential visit is however, part of the wider curriculum offer of our school and therefore it remains optional and is not a requirement should you decide your child won't take part.

If you need any further information before making a decision for your child, please don't hesitate to get in contact.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jodie Flynn', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Mrs Jodie Flynn

Acting Headteacher