



Stoke by Nayland C of E Primary School

**Years 5 & 6 Residential 18th – 20th June 2018
Kingswood, West Runton**

A Governor's Experience

The pupils arrived at school as normal on Monday morning, with the exception that there was great excitement about the experience to follow. Many commented that they had not been able to sleep well the night before as they were so excited about the trip.

After a short briefing in the classroom the 24 pupils and 4 adults hauled their luggage to the coach. Were we packing for 3 days or 3 weeks? I certainly had overpacked judging by the weight of my bag! By 9.30 we were on our way to the Norfolk coast (near to Cromer) and there was an excited buzz on the coach. The children were updated by request every 5 minutes or so as to estimating how long it would be until we would arrive at our destination!

We arrived at the big closed site gates shortly after 11.30am, parked, unloaded our luggage, then made our way to a classroom where we stored our luggage until we could have access to our rooms at 2.30pm.

Once this was done we took our backpacks and made our way to the rear of the site, lead by a member of the site staff, to a secure gate and then we left the site and walked along the top of the cliffs and followed the path down to the beach for our picnic. The tide had turned an hour or so before, so there was a large beach with sandy areas and lots of stones and pebbles. The children played football, skimmed pebbles on the waves, made a sea defence with large stones, made drawings in the sand and buried themselves or their friends – not completely I hasten to add! They also looked for fossils as this part of the coast is a protected area following the find of a fossilised woolly mammoth. Fossilised shark teeth may be found.

There was no paddling in the sea as we were told that the area is known to have Weever fish, that live in the water and burrow down into the sand and have sharp venomous spines that can cause a lot of pain if trodden on.

The sun was shining and it was a lovely warm day, so the sun screen was circulated.

We then made our way back to the site to meet our Kingswood group leader, James. He took us to collect our bags and directed us to our accommodation. We were located on two floors of 'Sandringham', the girls together in a room on the first floor and the boys in two rooms on the ground floor, with two adults on each floor.

Once we were organised, James took us for a tour of the site. Apart from the dining hall the most visited points were the drinking taps where we filled our water bottles throughout the day. There was then free time until our allotted dinner time at 5.35pm. The children had a large playing field and hard areas to play. They could borrow balls etc. by trading a possession of their own, which was returned in exchange for the play equipment.

After a tasty dinner we headed for our first activity. The children had been divided into two groups for the activities as the maximum number for an activity was 15. We had groups 6 and 7. Group 6 headed for 'Nightline' and 7 for 'Archery'. Each group covered the same activities over the stay. 'Nightline' involved finding your way with a blindfold. As a warm-up the children (and me), stood in a straight line blindfolded, we were then told to take steps forward, backwards, sideways, turn 90 degrees and then stop and remove the blindfolds and we should be back to our original positions. Our group (7) demonstrated our skill at this task by looking more like a scatter diagram – maybe the instructor got it wrong??????

We then formed a line and had our left hand on the shoulder of the person in front to keep a safe distance and we then had to follow a shaker sound in front, keeping our line – we had no idea where we were going, except for those who were peaking! We then were told we had arrived at the obstacle course and we could hold a rope with our right hand and take our left hand off the shoulder in front. We then had to follow the rope, stooping down when it went down and crawling through tyres, or stepping over tyres, stepping up and down. Communication was not always great from those ahead of us, I was at the back and was sometimes left long behind when told to stop. Fortunately, I had Mrs. Locke to give me some instructions to duck when needed, that was when she wasn't laughing at the sight in front of her. It does look a bit funny when you are crawling or crouching and others are standing-up and walking normally – you can see from the pictures!

For Archery the children were given instruction and then had three arrows each to start and then went on to play games, for example make a pizza by shooting for particular colours on the target for the base, tomato, toppings and cheese. At the end of the sessions the instructors discussed the skills they had learned from the activities.

The activities lasted 70 minutes and the last activity of the evening was a Pool session for both groups together. This again was enjoyed by all. The pool was a good size and had two water polo goals and footballs and a range of floats were supplied. I did feel a little sorry for the other adults, it was very hot and noisy in the room, but it was lovely in the pool! It was fantastic to see all the children playing together and having enormous fun.

After the session it was back to the canteen for hot chocolate and then bed. Not necessarily sleep, as that took a lot longer due to high spirits.

Tuesday started very early for many after a short night and there were some very tired faces at breakfast at 7.35am. After a full English, toast, cereal, yoghurt, fruit, batteries were re-charged but faces still looked tired. The children visited the site shop and then had some free time to rest or play.

The first activity of the day started at 9.30 and the children were awake once more. Group 6 did Archery and 7 did Aeroball. This comprised of 4 trampolines in a square, each with its own net walls but lower walls on the two inside sides. On the back of each there was a hole to aim a ball, smaller than a football through. The children had to bounce and try and throw the ball through the hole in front of them to win a point. There were two teams and one ball and you could pass the ball over to your team mate to shoot against their opponent. The next game involved not having the ball in your area when the countdown from 10 got to 1, otherwise you were out and replaced. The children soon learned to be tactical and wait before they released the ball, but there was a 5 second time limit to hold the ball.

The next activities were Zipwire and Caving. This was an opportunity for the children to face their fears if they wanted to do so. The Zipwire involved wearing a harness and helmet, walking up a tall tower, being attached to the zipline and stepping off the edge. When you get the end you slide back, drop the rope for the instructor below, undo a clip and turn a lever on your harness to lower yourself down.

Caving was much more interesting than just crawling through a tunnel. The children did crawl through a tunnel but into a circular chamber where we sat in a second world war pillbox, used to watch for a naval invasion and for planes in the air. The instructors gave a very interesting and enlightening talk about the war and the use of the pillboxes, how they were lit inside, the use of canaries for air quality, the hours the soldiers would stay in them at a time, what they ate. There were war-time posters around the walls and children could sit in front of one they liked and then talk about its purpose, such as growing food at home as we could not import food during the war. We then crawled through another tunnel into another larger chamber for another discussion and then the children were allowed to explore four other tunnels in groups, including 'Tight Squeeze', which was just about okay for an adult until you had to turn a corner! All tunnels lead back to the main chamber and the children had to find pictures with names, such as Chad and Herbie, that were drawn on the walls of the tunnels. Having spoken to some of the children beforehand about their fears of enclosed spaces, spiders etc., it was amazing to see them overcome those fears and enjoy the experience and learn so much, they should be very proud of themselves.

After our 12.35pm lunch the activities at 11.15pm were Aeroball / Zipwire, followed immediately by our 'Beach Adventure'. Our school together with two or three other schools made our way down to the beach with two instructors and, the children were able to play ball games or borrow nets to explore the rock pools looking for crabs, shellfish, fossils, pretty stones or shells, all of which had to be returned to where they came from. Afterwards, we made our way, some with damp feet, back up to the site to change for our 5.35pm dinner.

At 6.15pm it was time for Caving / Nightline activities, followed by Campfire, where our school joined two other schools for a session of standing singing and actions, choreographed by a host of instructors in the campfire circle. The children were refreshed at the end with hot chocolate and marshmallows. It was then time for bed and, after a full energetic day, the children were ready for a good night's sleep, even though some of them planned a long night! By 11pm all were fast asleep and so we adults 'hit the sack'.

Early next morning it was quiet, most children didn't know if they had slept well, they remember going to bed and then waking up in the morning – result! As it was our final day we had to shower and start organising our things ready to leave our rooms before the first activity. We stripped our bedding, taking this to the laundry and headed for our breakfast slot. At 9.30 we were Climbing / Problem Solving followed by Problem Solving / Climbing. Climbing was on a climbing wall using a harness. The children were asked to set themselves a target level to reach on the wall and their classmates encouraged them and directed them. The instructor then talked about life skills such as motivation and resilience that the activity involved.

Problem Solving involved firstly, standing in a circle with hands held and moving a hoop around the circle. We then went to a roped off circle with a plastic container in the middle on a table. The container had stones in the bottom to weigh it down. The children were given two lengths of rope and had to find a way to move the container from the table to outside the circle without entering the circle. Have a think about it then ask the children how it's done, it's clever and the knowledge may come in handy some time. They then had to stand on a z-shaped wooden plank and one of the children had to sort their classmates into height order, then another into month of birth and another into first name order. The children had (or should have) stayed on the plank the whole time and used the bends to pass each other.

It was then time for lunch followed by departure and the journey home. After an hour or so some of the children started napping, whilst others re-enacted the songs and action from the campfire the night before. When we arrived back at school some children were still sleeping. Hopefully all the children had a good night and were ready for school this morning.

From a personal angle I very much enjoyed and felt privileged to spend time with the children over the three days, talking with them about and, watching them face and take on challenges that help massively with their personal development and teach them life skills, seeing how they interact with the other children, care for each other and learn from each other as they spend time together and undertake activities and play together, experiences that maybe they would not gain without a trip such as this where they spend time away from home with a large group of their friends.

I am very grateful to the children for accepting me into the group and making me feel so welcome. My contribution to the school as a Governor involves little interaction with the children, so it is very rewarding to have the opportunity to spend time with them, bearing in mind that the major focus of the work we do, as a Local Governing Body, is directed to providing the best possible outcomes for the children.

Many thanks to Mrs. McGrath-Wells and Mrs. Locke for organising a great trip.

Peter Drew,
Governor.