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# TGC CAMPS

## HOBBS HILL FARM, CHIDDINGSTONE HOATH, KENT

15 – 26 May 2017

**Camping Project Report**

Campaigning for #Brilliant Residentials

**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

TGC delivered two weeks of camping for Year 5 / age 10-11 primary school children in May 2017. This followed three years of delivering immersive countryside experiences for NE London primary school children including a pilot camp in September 2016 to test the scope and scale that the project could grow into.

DELIVERY PERIOD : 15-26 May 2017

**PROJECT DEVELOPMENT & KEY OBJECTIVES**

Key objectives for TGC Camps:

- To provide at least 80 children with a high quality, practical, creative camping experience.
- To recruit, manage, equip and prepare the TGC team appropriately.
- To build on existing relationships with London schools and to inspire class teachers to generate similar nature and countryside immersive experiences for their school children in the future.
- To maximise the benefit of each visit by ensuring pupils and responsible adults are fully prepared.

To support these objectives TGC:

- Assigned TGC's Education & Programme Officer as TGC Camps Brilliant Residentials Project Manager to oversee the curation, implementation and management of the project.
- Recruited a trained, skilled and experienced team to deliver the activity programme directly and also act as custodians of the site.
- Met with class teachers, children and parents to design the activities particular to the needs of each school and to answer any questions / concerns.
- Equipped the camping programme including tents, sleeping bags and campfire cooking equipment.

**THE TEAM**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| TGC Camps Project Leader | : | Phoebe Nevill |
| TGC Senior Programme Manager | : | Amy Williamson |
| TGC CEO | : | Marnie Rose |
| TGC Delivery Team | : | Bea Patrick, Adam Njenga Sophie Swithinbank |
| Base Camp team / photography | : | Annabel Goulding & Peter Clarke |

**SCHOOLS**

We targeted schools with a significantly higher deprivation indicator than the national average (FSM 24%). These are the schools who host pupils below the poverty line and thereby reaching those who could benefit the most from the visit.

Participating schools: St Jude & St Pauls, Newington Green (Islington) and Kingsmead (Hackney).

| School name | Pupils | Adults | EASL % of class (English as a second language | FSM % (Free School Meals) UK average = 24% |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| St Jude & St Pauls | 26 | 3 | 60% | 27.04% |
| Kingsmead | 27 | 3 | 76.8% | 45% |
| Newington Green<br>(2 classes) | 20<br>22<br><br>TOTAL: 96 | 3<br>3<br><br>TOTAL: 12 | 67% | 79% |

**Beneficiaries: 95 children and 12 school staff / school volunteers participated in the project.**

**PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND SETTING UP THE SITE**

The site included:

- 10 tents and a set of sleeping equipment (kindly funded by the Nineveh Trust) decorated with bunting (funded by Big Lottery), TGC 7m bell tent and dining patrol tent (from previous Hobbs Hill years), 30 stools, 2 benches, trestle tables (funded from previous projects) and galvanised vermin free troughs on castors to store equipment in.
- Converted 1930's ex-hop picker hut fitted with kitchen (including shelving, fridge and freezer), bathroom (including toilet, shower, sink, first aid area), resources room (including shelving).
- Open fire with cooking grid in marked off 'kitchen' area with a dry pit for food waste plus all cooking equipment (funded by Nineveh Trust).
- Rope swing.

**FEEDBACK:**

All schools said:

- 100% of their class enjoyed the camp
- 100% of their children's health and wellbeing improved as a direct result of the experience
- This grant funded project enabled the price to be affordable for parents
- They would recommend the experience to a colleague or another school

**Class teachers said:**

"I have always believed ventures like school camp should be a permanent part of main stream school. We need to find a way of all young people regardless of background etc reconnecting with nature and appreciating the values of working and eating together in a rural environment."
*Roderick Ryan, Kingsmead, Hackney*

"I think that it's children like these that benefit the most. I completely underestimated how little they knew about outdoor living and nature. They arrived and they wanted to kill all the bugs, and chase all the birds and they've left with a respect for nature, understanding that we need to respect the environment and without a fear of minibeasts, mud and dirt."
*Olivia Silver, Kingsmead, Hackney*

"We have had a wonderful time camping! The children have had a chance to really be their best selves in an inspiring environment. I think they are seeing nature as something they can enjoy and

be part of, as well as their city homes and school."
*Rosa Treveni, Newington Green, Islington*

**Children said:**
"This is the best trip I've ever been on..... I feel so good being in nature."
*Jermaine, Elm Class, Newington Green, Islington*

"It was an experience like no other"
*Shadrack, Kingsmead, Hackney*

"I feel more in contact with nature because one night I slept with a stick and all the activities were amazing."
*Year 5 pupil, Kingsmead, Hackney*

**SUMMARY:**

It was a valuable, enjoyable and challenging experience for all school staff and children and the TGC team (staff and volunteers) created a high quality residential countryside experience, which could also expand to become even more special and beneficial to more in the future.

Although the excitement of being in a tent with your friends meant bedtimes took a little longer, the children were warm and comfortable in their sleeping equipment at nights. The vegetarian food was a good catch all accommodating different diets and religions. Food was complimented by children – one said "it's better than my Mums!" most children ate everything and the staff equally enjoyed the food. There was excellent feedback on the range of activities including enough time for free play around the site and in the woods. The only criticism was that there wasn't enough time for certain activities such as whittling.

**DEBRIEF AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE CAMPS:**

TGC staff & volunteers: It was felt that next time there should be three extra TGC team members.

**Camp Cook:**
The camp requires a cook to be responsible for designing the menu, arranging and ordering the food delivery, making sure the food is cooked for meal times. This will enable the TGC facilitators to be free to focus on delivery, and the volunteers free for running the behind the scenes of camp.

**TGC Team:**
Each site team member became equal over the project period even though we had a hierarchy in place so our reviewed team for another two week camp is as follows:
1 Camp Chief (Designated Child Protection & Safeguarding & H & S Lead)
1 Camp Cook
3 Facilitators
2 Base Camp Volunteers
This would allow for breaks and group debriefs led by the camp chief every day to check in on TGC staff energy levels.

**Delivery days**
Even with the addition of more staff members, the TGC team felt that the cross over of schools (one arriving off the train and one departing, set up for efficiency) on Wednesday each week was

too tiring and did not enable the team to take a break so their energy and enthusiasm for the group to follow felt compromised (although the school didn't pick up on this).
Next year we suggest a 2-night camp from Monday – Wednesday, Wednesday evening gap, and Thursday – Saturday 2 nights camp and that project remains a fortnight camping programme for the latter part of May 2018.

**School staff**
It is essential that each school brings the actual class teacher who knows and understands the needs of the class, the class TA, an SEN specialist and one of those people to be first aid trained. It is also vital that each school fully completes TGC's 'key child documentation' including medical/allergy, SEN and behavioural needs in full detail and returns this to TGC prior to the visit to allow for TGC Team to discuss the needs of the children and how best TGC can accommodate them. We recommend providing a truly pastoral school team and fulfilling the paperwork duties should be a prerequisite of any school who benefits from this programme next year.

**Health & Safety**
The TGC Team felt the reality of the road walking from Ashurst station to the off road beginning of the hike was potentially more hazardous than first thought due to the bend in the road, particularly as the groups are larger than 20. Next time, we would like to try Cowden station once again and recce the route across the Boomaars land / footpath from the bottom of Moat Lane. The visit to Willett's Dairy Farm was a lovely addition but it was felt that the loss of the visit would not impact on the quality and enjoyment of the project. Walking from Cowden would also enable a walk through Keysden Wood and Birchcope Shaw, which will be full of bluebells in May.

The Risk Assessment worked well on the ground. One amendment for next time – the hut gets hot in the sun! So briefing to group needs to include this.

One unnecessary visit to minor injuries unit, one for child stepping on another child's foot which turned out to be fine (no bruise or mark).

One child was unwell so was collected by their parent to be returned the next day to re-join the group.

**Resources**
Equipment funding for tents, sleeping and cooking equipment from the Nineveh Trust was gratefully received. It was felt that these items would be needed next year:
Adult size sleeping bags (5)
Whittling gloves and aprons (4)
Flint and steels (5)
Thick dark blindfolds (30)
Pillows & pillow cases (10)
Large colander
Another padlock for the silver containers

**WCs**
We would like to revisit the discussion about building a (non odorous!) compost toilet, which is ideal for HH as it has low water pressure and because it won't get a lot of use throughout the year. Another alternative is to build an additional WC in the current WC with another sink but this will impact on water pressure at busy times – although doable if staggered use.

**CHALLENGES AND TROUBLE-SHOOTING:**

- Walk from Ashurst station – safe walking practise and brief to school staff – for review – possible return to Cowden station instead as safer walk (less road).
- Heavy rain – create a more thorough and comprehensive list of wet weather activities that is pinned up and easily accessed.
- Roles & responsibilities of TGC Team – need more staff (a camp cook and another TGC team member) and weekend site custodians, at least two people.
- Need to consider base camp team as being fully paid staff next time due to possibility of volunteers possibly not being available next year.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2018 & 2019:**

- May 2018 Hobbs Hill: to deliver two weeks of camping 14-25 May 2018 improving and honing the programme so that it is the best it can be including finding footpath around edge of Boomaars land. Apply recommendations from TGC team debrief and feedback from schools.
- Whistlers Farm, Edenbridge: recce Edenbridge site with TGC team to assess for suitability to expand the camping programme into June/July 2019. Site needs water and approximate cost is £2,500. Awaiting update from Environment Agency c/o The Boomaars. Recce to be arranged autumn 2017.
- Expand camping offer at Hobbs Hill for whole of May in 2019.

The Garden Classroom, teachers and pupils involved would like to thank the Nineveh Trust, Goldman Sachs Gives and the Boomaars Family for funding this project which has given disadvantaged children memorable experiences and has established the footprint for opening up camping in Kent to more disadvantaged children.