

Hi Aidge,

As a school on the edge of the Peak District, we continue to use the fabulous resources of Thornbridge Outdoors for our Y5 residential for many reasons. Despite many of our children having the wonderful opportunities to experience the outdoors with their families we still feel there are many more opportunities that can be gained at Thornbridge.

Firstly, using Thornbridge Outdoors supports a local business which is important to us. Also as there is limited travelling, this cuts down on costings for our families which hopefully enables all our children to be part of the experience. This is something which we fully encourage and support.

The activities we choose are hopefully ones where our children can either 'show off' skills they may have acquired out of school e.g. climbing, or be able to try a new skill which they may have the opportunity to continue to do as a new hobby afterwards. This also may enable some children to 'shine' in areas that academically they don't have the skills or the confidence to do within a classroom.

The other activities we have chosen to do may help to challenge nerve, co-operation, support, perseverance and even fear (e.g. zip wire, high ropes, low ropes, Thornbridge challenge etc). These activities also rely on individual, team and whole class co-operation and support. It's amazing and surprising that we still have children in our catchment that can't ride a bike and therefore at Thornbridge there is the time to spend teaching children to ride - amazing!

Within these activities, the children strike up a different relationship with the staff that they work with in school. We are lucky that a variety of our staff from teaching assistants, teachers and members of the senior leadership group come and join us at some point throughout the week. Not only do the children see the skills (or lack of skill!) the staff bring but can see how even adults need encouragement and support in facing their fears for example climbing the tree to the zip wire! This relationship is continued where we as the staff are privileged to be part of their successes and achievements and another kind of trust is formed.

On return to school, we have found that the children's bond between their peers as well as with us has changed. They tend to gel more, be more patient and aware of each other's characteristics, skills, abilities etc that they probably weren't aware of before the residential. This is invaluable as they continue into their final year of primary school. We hope they build on their new friendships and skills in their problem solving and in other curriculum areas having found new confidence and pride in themselves knowing that if they persevere enough and not shy away from anything that they perceive to be difficult or out of reach of achievement, that they will have a go and take with them throughout their lives that 'anything is possible.'

The things I have mentioned above are just some of the elements of what we have found effective and valuable in our outdoor education journey and I hope that this information is of some use to you.

Can I take this opportunity again to thank ALL the staff at Thornbridge for their input into our residential weeks. All the above would not be possible without their part in the week - the planning, admin, the preparation of the Lodge/Farm, the instructors and their amazing relationship they have with the children; despite the amount of children they instruct each year, it seems as if they are doing it for the first time with the same amount of enthusiasm and support. Nothing seems a problem. We love the fact that each year there are

improvements such as the cook! Fantastic idea and super to have the hour included that takes off the pressure of food preparation at that crucial time. (Just the bed sheets to sort! They just aren't big enough and it's the only stressful part of the stay when you are trying to make 30 beds!)

We love coming to Thornbridge and hopefully will continue to plan residential with you for a long time to come - it feels like staying with old friends on our return each year!

Regards

C. Harling

*Assistant Headteacher
Greystones Primary School*