



John Devine M.A. (Hons); M.Ed; SQH
Headteacher

Breadalbane Academy
ABERFELDY PH15 2DU
Tel 01887 822300 • Fax 01887 820464
Email breadalbane@pkc.gov.uk
Website www.breadalbane.pkc.sch.uk

Dear Karl

Lochgoilhead Trip

Further to our initial consultation about the P7-S1 transition at last week's Parent Council, I felt it might be useful to put in writing my thinking on the Lochgoilhead trip.

It was clear that this trip is very popular. Parents spoke passionately about the benefits of a week's adventurous outdoor activities; of how children, often away from their families for the first time, discover that they are capable of things they previously wouldn't have had the confidence even to try.

I hope I made it clear at the meeting that I absolutely accept the value of such outdoor experiences. It's a joy to see how positively many children react to an experience such as the Lochgoilhead trip. That's something I want Breadalbane pupils to carry on enjoying as long as I am headteacher.

However, in its current form the Lochgoilhead trip is different. Unlike every other school trip that Breadalbane Academy offers, the Lochgoilhead trip is not an optional enhancement to the core curriculum. It is actually part of the core curriculum, specifically the P7-to-S1 transition package.

It's a part of the core curriculum, and yet we charge £250 for it, rising to around £300 this year. For some families, this is simply unaffordable. There may also be other children who have perfectly valid non-financial reasons for not wanting to go on a week-long residential trip. For whatever reason, in 2015 one quarter of our new S1 did not participate in this vital part of our transition programme.

These children aren't just missing out on some of the benefits of the transition package; it's actually worse than that. By excluding them from the part of the transition package specifically designed to foster friendships between children from different primary schools, we may in fact be making their move to secondary harder.

I'm sure parents are aware that the Scottish government's highest priority in education is the idea of 'closing the gap'. At the moment in Scotland, children from deprived backgrounds are significantly less likely to do well at school. This is true in most countries, but the picture in Scotland is poor in comparison to similar countries, including England.

To try and change this, the Scottish government has instructed schools to test all of their practices for inclusivity. Nothing we do should exclude pupils on the basis of income or social background. I'm afraid that, for as long as it is part of the core curriculum, the Lochgoilhead trip fails that test.

However, that doesn't mean Breadalbane pupils have to miss out on a residential outward-bound trip. We're looking into offering Lochgoilhead, or a similar trip, as an enhancement to the curriculum at some point in S1, probably during Activities Week.

As well as moving the trip to Activities Week, the other ideas we're exploring include:

- The possibility of running a shorter trip as part of the transition, which might allow the school to cover all costs, so that parents didn't have to pay anything.
- Funding respite care for Young Carers (children who have caring responsibilities, for instance for a disabled parent), so that they can participate too.

These are worthwhile and exciting possibilities, I hope you'd agree. We'll keep the Parent Council fully informed of progress on both.

The school hasn't made a final decision about the Lochgoilhead trip yet, as we are keen to share our thinking with parents in the first instance. However, I don't think it can be part of the future P7-S1 transition. I know parents and pupils may be disappointed, but I hope the reasons are clear. I cannot prioritise a school trip, no matter how worthwhile, over the Scottish Government's policy of inclusion. And even if I could, I wouldn't want to and I hope parents wouldn't want me to.

I propose to post this letter on the school website and invite parental comments until mid-January, at which point a decision will be taken. I would also appreciate it if you could share this letter through your own website and encourage parents who would like to express a view to get in touch with the school.

Yours sincerely



John

John G Devine
Headteacher/Campus Leader
Breadalbane Academy
Breadalbane Community Campus
Crieff Road
Aberfeldy
PH15 2DU
01887 822300