



Community Service Summer Camp

August, 2011



Aims of Project

- to provide young people in care the opportunity to enjoy an activity-based holiday
- provide positive role models for young people in care
- to give senior Wykehamists leadership opportunities in planning and leading a Summer Camp, and to broaden their life experiences.

Objectives of Project

- to promote the emotional and social development of children in care by organising team-based activities in which all the children can be actively involved
- to nurture a friendly atmosphere at the campsite at Ninham farm in which the children have fun, and feel safe and well cared for
- to establish friendships with the children.

Wider benefits

- Youngsters involved: to provide a respite from challenging home circumstances, a sense of hope and the building of their self-esteem
- Wykehamists: to develop leadership potential and to nurture a caring ethos by serving others
- Winchester College: to broaden our Community Service remit by bringing benefit to vulnerable children in Hampshire.

Camp participants

In August, 2011, a committed team of senior Wykehamists and two dons accompanied a social worker from Hampshire County Council (HCC), to give local children in care, aged between 8 and 11 years, the opportunity to have a summer camp on the Isle of Wight. All of the children were from challenging home backgrounds and had been recommended for the holiday by HCC Children's Services department. Over 40 children in care had expressed an interest in the holiday.

Summer Camp location

The CS Summer Camp was held at Ninham Farm campsite, near Shanklin in the Isle of Wight. The campsite had an excellent outdoor pool, several fishing lakes and tracts of

ancient woodland. Ninham farm was an ideal base to explore the island, and the owner was very accommodating of our large and enthusiastic camping group.

Summer Camp programme

Wykehamists had prepared a diverse programme of activities that incorporated flexibility to deal with any adverse weather conditions (!), and to give children sufficient space and time to relax and unwind during the week. On the first afternoon after having set up camp, the children were content to play games and enjoy the campsite pool before exploring Shanklin's esplanade and eating fish pie at 'The Steamer Inn'. On Tuesday the team participated in horse-riding, enjoying a hack through stunning countryside. Although one of the boys became very distressed during the initial induction session, the remaining boys gained enormous satisfaction from the activity and their level of concentration during the hack impressed us all. Thereafter, leaders were continually reminded that the children wanted to go again! Despite the wet day, the team spent a pleasurable afternoon walking from St Helens to Bembridge, and exploring Bembridge pier and lifeboat. The evening was the nocturnal highlight with a fish and chip supper and the thrills of Sandown pier! On Wednesday it was a relief to have a dry and warm day for our sea kayaking and surfing activities. Wykehamists doubled up with their buddies in the sea kayaks and spent two hours exploring Sandown Bay in glorious sunshine, before returning to shore for team games on surf boards. The children had a memorable time at Whitecliff Bay in the afternoon, sea bathing, sand digging and crabbing at the foot of the dramatic chalk cliffs of Bembridge Down, followed by an evening BBQ at the campsite. The following morning heavy rain prompted a unanimous decision to treat the boys to a breakfast on Shanklin esplanade. Thankfully, the weather front quickly passed us by and we headed off to the west of the island along the military road. The boys walked from Freshwater Bay to the Needles, relishing both the physical challenge and panoramic views of Tennyson Down. Some were too reticent to take the cable car to Alum Bay, but the boat trip to the Needles proved very popular, if a little choppy! It was a memorable and exhilarating day for the whole team. Our final day was dampened by more rain but the children were not deterred from a final dip in the pool and souvenir hunting in Old Shanklin. Finally, they enjoyed several hours at Steephill Cove, near Ventnor, before heading to West Cowes for the return journey.

Wykehamists' contributions to the project

It was a privilege for CLT and APJ to work alongside an impressive team of Wykehamists. Throughout the week the boys were patient, kind and good humoured, and they were undeniably, a credit to the College. Patrick Butler established a very close rapport with his buddy and gave unceasingly of his time and energy to all the boys. He was helpful at all times and volunteered with tasks at every opportunity. His ability to enthuse the most reserved of children, was a perfect tonic for the leadership team. Jason Lau showed great aptitude and maturity in dealing with difficult incidents. During the horse-riding activity, he spent an hour consoling young Kaylem in pouring rain. The trotting activity in the training arena had proved too much for him, and he had responded by shouting, screaming, hurling his riding hat across the yard, charging out of the building and sobbing uncontrollably in a heap on wet grass. A day later, Jason's reserves of patience were again, tested to the limit when teaming up with Joey, his buddy, in the sea kayak. The pair capsized boundless times and at one point Jason was left mid-drift as Joey paddled off by himself! Patrick Vickery was

gifted at making the children feel at ease; he was extremely apt in striking up a conversation, and in maintaining the children's interest in activities. His ability to cook a large breakfast by the end of the week was most encouraging! Throughout the week, he was quietly authoritative and encouraged the boys at every turn. Although the team was small, this particular group of Wykehamists had just the right skills and attributes to enable the children to feel at ease. The success of the project was wholly attributed to the sensitive and thoughtful handling of the buddies under their care. Through their efforts, the children cultivated a sense of wonder of the world around them, and in small measure, a new ethic and a practical sort of hope.

Final Comments

CLT would like to thank the Headmaster and Mr Wyke for enabling the CS Summer Camp project to go ahead, and to Andrew Jaffe who nobly gave up a week of his holiday, and at short notice. His patience and relaxed manner were unrelenting, despite his sleep deprivation! CLT owes a debt of gratitude to Adeline Lombardo and the Charities Committee, John Cullerne and the Quelle team, and to David Fellowes, without whom the project would not have gone ahead. CLT is also indebted to the Children's Services at Hampshire County Council, to Lee Culhane whose unstinting enthusiasm for the project overcame numerous hurdles, and to Joe, the HCC Care Ambassador who accompanied the trip. Joe provided the leadership team with a valuable insight into the lives of children in care; he was both an encourager and a disciplinarian, and was good company throughout the holiday.

CL Talks
31st August, 2011