

Henley Fort 2026 – Parent’s Information meeting

We are really looking forward to taking the children on their Year 4 residential to Henley Fort. This trip is always a real highlight of the year and provides a wonderful opportunity for the children to develop independence, resilience and friendships, all while enjoying a busy and exciting few days away from home.

Henley Fort is located just outside Guildford, set on The Mount with fantastic views across the town. Originally built as a Victorian fort to help defend London, it is now run by Surrey Outdoor Learning & Development (SOLD), who provide high-quality outdoor education experiences. The staff there are excellent - experienced, enthusiastic and incredibly supportive of the children.

During our stay, the children will be sleeping in a secure, fenced camping area in traditional Mongolian yurts. These are well-equipped with sturdy bunk beds, lighting and heaters if needed. One yurt will be allocated to staff and positioned at the entrance to the camping area, so there is always an adult close by. Although we are visiting at the end of June, it is important to remember that nights can still feel quite cold. There are spare blankets available, but please do ensure your child brings warm nightwear - long-sleeved pyjamas, a jumper or hoodie, and socks are all recommended.

The site will be shared with another school group, but we will have our own clearly designated areas. In addition to the yurts, we have access to a communal indoor space with tables, chairs, heating, a fridge, kettle and running water. This is where we will gather for lunch, spend some quieter time in the evenings, and enjoy activities such as reading, chatting, or a well-earned hot chocolate and biscuit before bed.

There is a purpose-built toilet and shower block on site, with individual cubicles and lighting for use at night. These are cleaned daily and maintained to a high standard. Children will be supported when using these facilities. There are also separate staff-only facilities available.

For many children, this will be their first time away from home, and while the excitement usually takes over, it is quite normal for there to be occasional moments of homesickness. Please be reassured that staff are very experienced in supporting children through this. We know the children well and are used to helping them settle quickly if they feel unsettled. In reality, the days are so full and engaging that most children are simply too busy enjoying themselves to dwell on being away, and it is often the case that parents miss them more than the other way around!

Bedtimes are always an experience in themselves. On the first night, excitement tends to run high and it can take a while for everyone to settle. By the second night, however, the children are usually completely exhausted after a full day of activities, and things are much quieter and the staff get an earlier night too!

The residential will be led by Mrs Breslaw, supported by Mrs Spicer, Mrs Reilly (during the day) and Mrs Barnes (in the evenings). These are all familiar faces to the children, and they will be very well cared for throughout the trip.

We will travel by train from **Witley railway station** to Guildford on the Wednesday morning (exact timings will be confirmed). Children should arrive with a small backpack containing their packed lunch and a water bottle, while suitcases will be transported separately by parent volunteers. On arrival at the station, we ask that you say your goodbyes on the Haslemere-bound platform. The children will then be escorted across safely in small groups by staff. We will be accompanied on the train by parent volunteers, and on arrival in Guildford we will be met by Henley Fort instructors who will guide us to the site. We will return in the same way on Friday.

From the moment we arrive, the children will begin their residential experience by enjoying the packed lunch they have brought from home (please remember that this must be nut-free). After that, they will move straight into a range of exciting outdoor activities. A full itinerary can be found on the accompanying PowerPoint, but all activities are designed to be engaging, fun and rewarding, helping the children to build confidence and create lasting memories.

When packing, it is best to think in terms of a “three-day forest school.” Clothes should be practical and suitable for all weather conditions - things may get muddy, wet or dusty. We strongly encourage children to take part in packing

their own bags (with your support), so they know what they have brought and can find things easily. Including a simple list of contents can also be very helpful when it comes to repacking at the end of the trip.

Footwear should be sensible - trainers are fine for most activities if the weather is dry. A pair of easy-to-slip-on indoor shoes for wearing in the yurts or when heading to the toilets at night is a must. Sandals and flip-flops are not suitable.

Please include a couple of plastic bags or bin liners for dirty clothes, as well as a book or small travel game for quieter moments. We ask that no electronic devices are brought - this includes phones, tablets and games consoles. There is no need for cameras either, as staff will take plenty of photos. A small cuddly toy is also a lovely idea; even children who might not usually bring one often find comfort in having something familiar at bedtime.

Children are welcome to bring a small amount of sweets or snacks. These will be collected on arrival and stored safely in named bags. This helps prevent wildlife being attracted to the yurts and allows staff to manage when snacks are enjoyed, often as a little boost at just the right moment. There is no need to send large quantities.

If your child has a birthday during the trip, you are very welcome to provide a cake and we will celebrate together. Please ensure that the school office has up-to-date information regarding any medical or dietary needs. All medication, including items such as throat lozenges, must be handed to Mrs Spicer the day before departure. She will manage and administer all medication during the trip.

Finally, as with any school activity, children are expected to follow our behaviour expectations and represent the school positively. We will go through the code of conduct with them before the trip. In the unlikely event of serious behaviour concerns, parents may be contacted and asked to collect their child, although this is very rare.

Overall, this residential is a fantastic experience. The children gain so much from the opportunity to spend time outdoors, try new things, and enjoy time with their friends in a different setting. It is always a joyful, memorable few days, and we are confident that your children will return home happy, proud and full of stories to share.

We can't wait to take them!