



The Learning Away schools have developed a series of themed resource packs to help other schools plan and deliver **Brilliant Residentials**.

Find out more at: <http://www.learningaway.org.uk/>

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS – TOP TIPS

The Learning Away partnership schools spent a great deal of time working with families to ensure they were comfortable and confident about their children attending residentials. The key to success is to communicate clearly and regularly with parents and carers, and to be honest and straightforward about the risks and benefits of residentials.

This compilation of the Learning Away partnership schools' Top Tips for communicating with parents and carers is intended to give you a head start as you plan your next brilliant residential.

INTRODUCE THE RESIDENTIAL

Send out an initial letter, introducing the residential. Incorporate a couple of photographs of the venue, perhaps showing young people engaged in activities or leisure time. Include:

- Details about where the residential will take place, including a description of the venue or site, its address and its website if there is one
- The start and end dates and information about travel logistics
- An overview of the theme, curriculum focus or objectives, so that parents and carers can see there is a clear purpose for the residential
- An indication of what young people will gain from attending the residential
- Details of at least a few of the activities planned for the residential
- Information about teachers and other adult helpers who will be in attendance
- The cost, how it can be paid (e.g. by instalments) and when the final balance is due.

HOLD AN INFORMATION EVENING

For some parents and carers, a school residential will be the first time they've allowed their child to stay away from home overnight. In addition to managing the fears and expectations of the young people, it's important to recognise those of parents and carers. An information evening will go a long way towards building confidence, which in turn will enable 'first timer' parents and carers to support their child in the run-up to the residential.

- Create a slideshow illustrating aspects of the residential such as the accommodation, dining and food preparation areas, leisure time activities, bedtimes and examples of the focused learning young people will engage in during the course of the residential.



You are free to share for non-commercial purposes, but please signpost: <http://www.learningaway.org.uk>

- Explain how young people’s learning on the residential will support, enrich and extend their classroom-based learning. Include details of the programme of study leading up to the residential and how the outcomes from the residential will feed into young people’s on-going learning so that parents and carers see the seamless nature of your integrated curriculum.
- Include comments from young people themselves; for example quotes about their hopes and fears, and examples of work from previous years’ residentials.
- Provide printed handouts to take away – perhaps a brochure from the venue, a copy of the slides and a ‘parent pack’ – see above.

CIRCULATE A PARENT PACK

Nearer the time of the residential, follow up the initial letter and information evening with more detailed information regarding logistics, timing, packing, permissions and FAQs. Design the parent and carer pack to be shared with the young people themselves, so include information you think will be relevant to adults and young people – such as mealtimes and bedtimes! The pack could comprise:

- A [kit list](#).
- [Parental consent form](#) to include photographic permission, medical information and parental contact details.
- Detailed information about the venue, including health and safety issues, insurance, menus, sleeping and hygiene arrangements and staffing.
- Mobile phone and electronic gadget protocol – and times it will be possible / convenient for parents and carers to call young people.
- A plan, or agenda for the residential with timings, if known.

DURING THE RESIDENTIAL...

Depending on the length of the residential, some young people may wish to speak to parents or carers during the course of the trip. Gaining confidence and building independence are vital elements of any residential, so young people should be encouraged to limit their communications with parents and carers unless there is a genuine need to be in close contact. However, homesickness will inevitably afflict some young people; knowing it will be possible to get in touch with home at a pre-arranged time can help them manage these feelings.

- Agree a communication protocol beforehand, including whether young people are allowed to bring mobile phones with them. This protocol should include use of social media during the residential.
- If your school uses a ‘text to parents’ service, consider sending short, positive daily updates to parents and carers, to reassure them that all is well.



AFTER THE RESIDENTIAL...

Parents and carers will be keen to hear everything about the residential; the reports they receive from their children may only show part of the picture. Follow up the residential with a newsletter or email – ideally, compiled by the young people themselves – to circulate amongst parents and carers. Consider sharing images and text that illustrate:

- Young people’s achievements – academically, personally and socially
- Risk taking and successful challenges
- Social times and examples of young people taking the lead
- High quality learning and examples of young people’s own work

