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Dear Parents/Carers

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD SCHEME (DofE)

As you may be aware, we offer our Year 9 students the opportunity to begin their DofE journey, by taking part in the Bronze Award Scheme. This is a great opportunity to enhance the personal development of individuals, build resilience, form new friendships and develop skills away from the classroom.

We would like to welcome you to a Parent's Information Evening on **Monday 5th October from 6:00pm until 7:00pm**, in the Sixth Form Atrium, to find out more about the award in general and how we operate it within school. We would encourage you not to bring your son/daughter as they will have already seen this information during assembly.

Below is an outline of what the award entails, for you to determine if the award is suitable for your child. You may well already be well aware of the requirements having had elder siblings who have already completed the award. If so, I hope they enjoyed the experience and they have already encouraged their brother or sister to take part.

Overview of Award
In order to complete the full Award, participants must complete 4 separate sections for a certain length of time ensuring they show a regular commitment of 1 hour a week to each activity. These are Physical, Skill and Volunteering. All participants must also complete a multi-day Expedition where they walk along a pre-planned route and remain self-sufficient throughout.

The 4 distinct sections are as follows:

Volunteering
Participants are required to complete at least 3 months of regular volunteering. This must be for a non-profit making organisation (although there are some concessions such as care homes) and be at least 1 hour per week, a total of 12 hours. This is by far the most difficult section for youngsters to complete as they can find it difficult to find volunteering opportunities. Our scheme has been running for around 10 years now and we have built a good reputation amongst local community organisations and we are finding, year on year that it is getting a little easier as organisations realise the benefits. We can give the students lots of suggestions on where or how to volunteer.

Physical
Students are required to complete at least 3 months of regular physical activity, something which raises the heartbeat. Again, it is 1 hour per week for 12 weeks. The range of activities is enormous and this seems to be an easy section for most to complete. If your son or daughter is already attending a sports club or team training then this would count.

Skill
Participants are required to 'learn something new' such as a cooking, touch typing, first aid, IT skills, musical instrument. This can be done in the home or remotely. Again, the range of opportunities is extensive and it is a great opportunity to achieve a good depth of knowledge on an interesting subject. Regular school work cannot be included but extra-curricular learning, such as Latin, would be acceptable. Once again it is 1 hour per week for 12 weeks. This section cannot be something physical, e.g. football skills is not accepted however football coaching is. Please always check with me before beginning this section.

Caveat: - one of the above sections must be completed for 24 weeks (24 x 1 hour sessions). If your child is sporty and attending team training then this would be the obvious choice, or, if they are learning piano anyway, this would be perfect for the skills section. If they help at a brownie/scouting group already this could be their 6 month section for volunteering.

Each section requires an independent assessor who cannot be a family member. Sports coaches, music teachers and volunteer organisation managers are good people to approach for this. They are required to write a report at the end of the section giving details of the activity completed. We also insist on the completion of a weekly log sheet, completed by the student giving brief details of what they have done and initialled by a parent/guardian.

Each activity must be approved on the eDofE system before starting, just to check that it is a recognised and achievable commitment. All the admin can be completed on an easy-to-use mobile App by the student.

These three sections will be monitored by the school DofE team to ensure that the relevant inputs are being made and that the award remains achievable.

Expedition
This is a walking expedition with an overnight camp.

This is by far the most exciting and strenuous part of the award and we use an Approved Activity Provider (AAP) to deliver this section. Doing so allows us to open the award to everyone in the year group who may want to consider it. Students will operate in groups of between 5 and 7 people to complete a 2 days training in school (no overnight) and an overnight assessed expedition - so 4 days of activity in total. The dates for these are shown below.

- **Training Days – 24th & 25th April 2027:** 1 day will be learning key skills – map reading, navigation, first aid, cooking and nutrition and tent building. The other day will be walking covering around 10 kilometres, carrying everything necessary for camping and living outdoors. The walk is supervised by an instructor from the AAP.
- **Assessment Expedition – 19th & 20th July 2027:** This expedition will consist of a 2 day walk with an overnight camp. The students will be watched by their independent assessor who will check the ability of the group and report on them to the DofE. This walk is supervised remotely with students checking in at check points along the route.

Caveat: - The expedition phase is progressive and each element **must** be completed before the next one can be started. This means that a full commitment to the dates is essential before registration. In the past, some of our sportier candidates have had late call-ups for regional or national matches/events and asked to be excused DofE. If an element is not completed then it would have to be done independently at added expense.

As previously mentioned, students will work in groups for this phase and they are asked to choose their own groups. This can cause worry for some and we try to leave this choice as late as possible, while friendship groups settle in Year 9, but inevitably there are some who struggle with this. Where possible we try to intervene as little as possible and will not dictate to individuals which group they should be in.

The participants have to carry everything they need for the 2 days walk, including group equipment that they will be given. The rucksacks end up at about 16kg which is considerable.

Although we will be encouraging and advising participants on the other sections our main focus within school is preparing them for their expedition. All other sections are organised and completed by the students themselves. More information is available at www.dofe.org. There is a brief overview and key documents available on the school DofE page – listed under the "students" button on the main page.

Cost

The cost is approximately £300 per person. This includes the 4 days of training, transport costs, campsite fees, and group equipment. It also includes the registration to the award with the DofE organisation. The AAP supplies all instruction, all campsite places and daytime supervision. The school is liable for overall supervision and safeguarding, transportation to expedition areas and in particular, overnight supervision whilst on the expedition. Final costs are dependent on the number of participants. There are additional costs to you for personal equipment such as rucksack/sleeping bag/mat (some items are available in school) and boots as well as the provision of food for the expedition days. For a fuller outline of the expedition, this year's expedition guide is available on the school website.

Certificate of Achievement

During Covid times, the DofE launched **#DofEWithADifference** which enabled students to complete any section and receive a Certificate for it, as Covid restrictions may have prevented students from completing all the sections. A Certificate of Achievement has now been introduced enabling students to complete any of 3 sections. Participant's achievements can now be celebrated where any section may have been a potential barrier to them completed the full Award. With this in mind, if a student would like to complete the Physical, Skill and Volunteering sections, but not the Expedition they can receive a Certificate of Achievement for their successes. The cost to complete this Certificate would be approx. £50 to cover the registration fee to the program, a % of the school DofE licence fee and the associated admin costs.

Overall, the DofE program is a wonderful experience for students and I hope that I have given a good account of it. It is not all rose-tinted and the award is not an easy ride. It requires a great deal of commitment to get through all of the elements, the easiest, in fact, being the expedition as they are led through it. By far the greatest barrier to completion is a failure to complete one or more of the other sections. This requires some badgering from us here at school, but the onus is on the individual and yourselves to make sure they are giving the award the regular input it requires. Please be aware that all of the school staff who organise and assist are volunteers and give their own time to make sure as many participants as possible achieve their individual goals.

After the Parent Information Evening I will write to you again, asking you to register your interest for the Award or Certificate. In the meantime, if you have any questions or wish to discuss the award in more detail, please feel free to contact me at dofe@edgbarrowschool.co.uk.

Yours faithfully



Matt Whiddett
Bronze DofE Coordinator