



Queen Mary's Grammar School

Headmaster: T J Swain, M A

September 2017

Dear Parents

RE: Queen Mary's Grammar School Overseas Expedition to the Indian Himalayas in 2019

Following the success of recent trips to Borneo and Tanzania, the school is planning an expedition to the **Indian Himalayas in Summer 2019**. This will be aimed at **students in Year 10 to 12** and will take the form of a two-year programme involving fund-raising, team building and physical preparation in the UK before the 31-day overseas expedition itself.

The fundraising phase will require students to undertake planning, team-building and preparation activities ready for the trip. An essential training weekend within the UK – led by Outlook Expeditions and QMGS staff – will focus on individual and team skills necessary for the Indian Himalayas. Once overseas, the expedition will be split into 4 phases:

The **Acclimatisation** phase will take place in New Delhi, where students will get used to the hustle and bustle of this incredibly country. Students will then fly to Leh in the Himalayas, where they will begin the **Community Project** phase. Here they will work alongside local villagers to build a greenhouse for the local community. Due to rapid climate change within the region, the delicate balance that has maintained life in the Himalayas has been disrupted and the consequences have been severe.


The **Physical Challenge** phase is packed with adventure and opportunity. Students will trek through stunning landscapes, occasionally being stopped in their tracks by ancient monasteries surrounded by dizzying peaks. A highlight of this phase – and the expedition – will be the challenge of Stok Kangri, standing at 6153m: a true peak of Himalayan proportions, which is the highest of the Stok range and is clearly visible from Leh over 15km away. This 10-day journey will also include a multi-day trek over the Stok La Pass (4900m) in order to reach base camp. Once here, an acclimatisation and glacier skills day will prepare the students for an attempt on the summit. This will be a unique and physically-demanding experience with over 1000m of ascent over the glacier and summit ridge. Team work alongside personal characteristics – such as determination and motivation – will key to success here.

Finally, the **Rest and Relaxation** phase allows the students to travel overland to Manali, where they will have a few days to recuperate and see such sights as the Nature Park, Hadimba Devi Temple and Naggar Castle. This will be followed by a rail journey to New Delhi before moving onto Agra for the spectacular Taj Mahal. A fitting end to a spectacular expedition.

Outlook Expeditions are an experienced overseas education provider, which the school has worked with before. They offer experienced, UK-trained guides who will lead the overseas sections, as well as support in all UK-based aspects of the expedition. The cost of the expedition is £3795, which includes all equipment specific to the expedition, transportation to and from the UK, food, accommodation and support staff – such as local guides; the cost also includes a donation to the project work in the Indian Himalayas.

The fundraising within the UK is a highly-significant part of the expedition and demands a commitment of planning, time and effort. Students are expected to raise part –if not all – of the money themselves. Indeed, in past expeditions many students have raised the full cost alongside A level study: an indication of the type of young adult the programme develops.

P.T.O

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As with all overseas trips, there will be associated costs that are not included in the price. Whilst medical insurance is included, insurance for personal items and cancellation is not. It would be wise to purchase such travel insurance independently at the time of booking. Furthermore, medication, vaccinations and personal equipment are not included in the expedition cost. A parental contribution towards UK travel, use of the Farchynys Estate for training and items such as team hoodies will also be asked for. The total amount will depend on transport and other costs but historically has been around £150.

This expedition is a physical and mental challenge and it must be noted from the outset that students must be capable of participating in the expedition. We insist that all participants have a base-level Multistage Fitness Test (Beep) score and be in sound physical and mental health prior to joining the expedition. Few students or staff can claim to already be fully prepared for such a demanding expedition, therefore a commitment to individual and school-based training programmes is expected.

This is an incredibly exciting opportunity for students. There will be a meeting for students and parents on **12th October at 6.00pm** in the **6th form Lecture Theatre**. Both staff from the school and Outlook Expeditions will give a presentation and be present to answer questions. There is no obligation at this stage. Application forms will be handed out at the meeting to those interested in signing up. To secure a place, students must fulfil (or be prepared to fulfil) the criteria detailed in this letter, as well as paying a deposit online to Outlook Expeditions. In the case of the expedition being oversubscribed, a lottery system will be used to assign places, with 'unsuccessful' applicants being placed on a reserve list. **The deadline for signing up to the expedition is Monday 6th November 2017.**

Please note that places on the trip are limited and are subject to the continual high standards of effort and application of your son/daughter as ambassadors of Queen Mary's Grammar School - places may be withheld or withdrawn if these standards - both academic and behavioural - are not maintained. Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Rendu, Teacher of Biology (e-mail: mo-rendu@qmg.s.walsall.sch.uk).

Yours Sincerely,

M.O. Rendu
Teacher of Biology