

**Holiday Basics: describing the fundamental structure of the proposed holiday**

SuperTroop at Fettes will have the same basic structure at an existing holiday scheme at Oundle School. This structure is extremely effective and we plan to replicate it in full.

1. How does the holiday work?

The holiday runs from a Sunday afternoon to the following Saturday morning in the school summer holidays, when respite need is greatest and pupils are available to volunteer as helpers. Holiday-makers (referred to as 'kids' during the holiday) are dropped off by their parents, who hand over luggage, check-in medication and meet their child's "bedtime helper". Each holiday-maker is paired with their bedtime helper for the rest of the first day. Kids and helpers operate on a one-to-one basis at all times, without exception. At bedtime, a 'bedtime helper' supports their 'bedtime kid' during their bedtime routine.

For the rest of the week (Monday – Friday inclusive) the kids are organised into four groups of four children each. Each group is named after something to do with that year's holiday theme. They are cared for by five groups of four helpers each, led by an experienced group leader. There is a rota which determines which group of helpers is matched with which group of kids on each day. Handover occurs at breakfast and kids 'swap back' to their bedtime helpers after sing-song in the evening. This system means that kids and helpers alike have a different experience on each day of the holiday, while also having the reassurance of a familiar face to carry out important routines in the evening and morning.

Example rota for four groups of kids: Sharks, Octopuses, Dolphins and Turtles

	Helper group 1	Helper group 2	Helper group 3	Helper group 4	Helper group 5
Sunday	<i>Kids arrive, spend the afternoon and evening with their bedtime helper</i>				
Monday	Sharks	Day off	Octopuses	Dolphins	Turtles
Tuesday	Turtles	Sharks	Day off	Octopuses	Dolphins
Wednesday	Dolphins	Turtles	Sharks	Day off	Octopuses
Thursday	Octopuses	Dolphins	Turtles	Sharks	Day off
Friday	Day off	Octopuses	Dolphins	Turtles	Sharks
Saturday	<i>Kids spend the morning with their bedtime helper, then get picked up</i>				

Helpers have some time off each day between about 9pm and 11pm. At 11pm, before bed, they meet with their group leader to prepare for the next day, and then they go to bed, sharing a room with their kid (and normally one other helper / kid pair). During the period from 9pm-11pm one group of helpers and their group leader is on duty, along with half of the senior team. In addition, a second group of helpers will be on 'reserve duty' – in house but not engaged in supervising the kids, in case an emergency evacuation is needed. On each day, the group of helpers who were previously on duty the night before takes a full day off – they will be asked to complete a few minor chores before they leave for the day, and will return in time for handover at evening sing-song.

During the week, helpers are supported most closely by their group leader. He or she will pair helpers and kids, orchestrating 'swaps' as needed to suit the needs of the holiday-makers and the skills of the helpers. The group leader also provides breaks for helpers, and can co-opt senior team members as needed (see next paragraph). The group leader directs their group of four helpers and four holiday-makers over the course of a day, ensuring that they move through the activities on the timetable and providing experienced support and guidance.



The holiday is led by a senior team of experienced volunteers, many of whom will have relevant professional expertise. The senior team provide the holiday infrastructure, for example, setting up and clearing away games and activities and managing record-keeping. Specific senior team members with relevant training will also manage high-risk activities such as managing special diets, administering medication and preventing and responding to crisis behaviour. On a day to day basis, a key role for the senior team is to provide a positive role model for helpers and concrete support to group leaders. This will often mean that a senior team member will shadow a group – especially when off-site – modelling excellent helper behaviour and supporting group leaders' decision-making.

2. What are the holiday-makers like?

The holiday-makers have learning disabilities which mean their ability level is usually far below their chronological age. Common diagnoses for children on the holiday include Down syndrome, autism, and cerebral palsy as well as a host of more rare conditions. Learning difficulties may extend to adaptive skills like self-care, meaning that holiday-makers often require support with dressing, at meal times, and may not be continent. Holiday-makers rarely have a good understanding of danger and require supervision at all times. Some holiday-makers will be non-verbal or have very small spoken vocabularies. They may use alternative communication strategies like simple signs (Makaton) or visual symbols.

Some holiday-makers may also have physical disabilities and use mobility aids such as wheelchairs, walkers and leg splints. Medical conditions often include epilepsy and allergies. Children with Down syndrome may have weak necks and heart conditions in particular.

In other respects, holiday-makers may be much like other children and teenagers – they enjoy dancing, music, chatting with friends and follow pop-culture. They may develop crushes on each other or on helpers. Many kids with physical disabilities and those with autism often love fast rollercoasters, and nearly everyone likes delicious ice creams. They might like to try rock-climbing, or be scared of heights. They can be confident swimmers, or nervous in the water. A key feature of the one-to-one holiday structure means that these differences in preference can be catered for very precisely, offering a tailored experience to every child.

3. What is the helper experience like?

Helpers are normally recruited from the lower 6th and upper 6th (penultimate and final) years of the school, with a balance across both year groups. Lower 6th pupils who attend a holiday are able to spread the word among the pupils and help to achieve continuity. Pupils who apply for a place in the lower 6th but do not get a space will be eligible to apply again in their upper 6th year. However, school leavers who don't get a place as a helper in the summer after they graduate from the school are not able to re-apply in the future.

Each new helper will often have the opportunity to attend the holiday for three summers running, if they are keen to return. Helpers who are unsafe with the holiday-makers are not permitted to return but otherwise we try to offer everyone a second summer and enthusiasts often return for three summers. We find that there is an effective self-selection process so that we don't become over-subscribed over time and we expect to be able to take on about 10 brand new helpers every year.

Once helpers have done three summers on the holiday they will be considered for group leader roles. These appointments are made on the basis of skill with the holiday-makers and ability to manage a helper group. There should always be an even gender split among group leaders (as there is among holiday-makers and helpers). For the inaugural holidays we will recruit and train group leaders from the local student population but as the holiday scheme continues we hope to have a 'home-grown' group leader cohort in place. Normally we find ourselves appointing one or two new group leaders each summer. Group leaders receive additional training in the months prior to the holiday.



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Group leaders are invited to return to the scheme for three summers running. As with helpers, if group leaders miss a summer their place is not reserved for their return, though an application to come back will be considered in the light of available space and level of expertise.

After three years in a group leader role, individuals will be considered for promotion to the senior team. Again, this is based on skill in working with the holiday-makers, ability to support and manage helpers, team-working ability and also professional skills. Once more, we aim to achieve an even gender split on the senior team. We normally appoint one new member to the senior team each year, though sometimes no appointment will be made.

As in the case of group leaders, we will recruit our initial senior team from among the local community including students, parents and professionals with relevant expertise. However, with time we hope this group will be entirely replaced by a home-grown senior team of former Fettes College pupils.