



HEADTEACHER: MELISSA ROBERTS

LONDON ROAD, TRENT VALE, STOKE-ON-TRENT, ST4 5NT

AW/hr/Y9 Year 9 'Graduation' Retreat – Ashburnham Place
11 October 2023

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Year 9 'Graduation' Retreat – Ashburnham Place

For over 20 years at St Joseph's, all Year 9 students have participated in the annual tradition of drawing Key Stage 3 to a close by heading away together, as a whole year group, for a week-long residential.

When asked, at the end of Year 11 and Year 13, for their most memorable and positive moments at St Joseph's, so many students talk about this retreat – especially about how it came at just the right time and what it meant to them.

Part of what makes this experience so special is, of course, the fact that it is time out of school. Part of what makes it special is the venue. (For years we have been using a center in Anglesey. From this year we have secured an even more exciting and beautiful venue in the south of England. See FAQ). Another thing that makes it special is that it is led by a mix of our own staff (who have come so far with these students) and people and agencies we bring in from outside of school. However, the thing that makes it most special of all is that it is the one time in their whole school life that they will go away with entire year group.

This trip will leave on **Sunday 19th and return on Friday 24th of May**. This is not only the last week of the 5th half term it is the very last week of Year 9, before they become N10 students in June, entering a new form group, beginning their GCSEs.

Whilst having all of the best elements of retreats that students may already have experienced in Key Stage 3, this retreat is so much more than this – including, this year, a day at Thorpe Park Resort on the trip down to Ashburnham on the Sunday. (See attached map of the resort.)

We have subsidized the cost (to £276) on the basis that we believe this trip is so important to the personal development, growth and happiness of your sons and daughters. However, our expectation has always been that all of year 9 take part in this retreat. If the whole year group attend, the cost will be closer to £255. You have until **19th April** to make the final payment for this trip. Before then, all we require is a first payment of at least **£26 by 20th October**, at the latest; then a further payment of at least **£80 by 5th February**.

Having searched nationwide for the right venue, we are thrilled to have found somewhere that will not only create the kind of memories and experiences that money cannot buy, but also offers true value for a 6-day, 5-night trip.

Telephone: 01782 848008, email: sjcollege@stjosephsmail.com www.stjosephstrentvale.com

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We hope that you are as excited to receive this letter as we are to be able to tell the students about it. Our aim is to work with you, to ensure that your sons and daughters get this once in a school-life experience. If you have any questions or concerns that are not addressed in the supplementary information, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Mr A Willis
Subject Leader for RE



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FAQ

What is the accommodation like?

There are a variety of 2, or 3 or 4 bed rooms. A number of these are ensuite, but not all. The centre is used by organisations and weddings to hold conferences. The standard of accommodation therefore reflects that. It is not simply a centre for young people. We will ensure that all students get to room with friends.

What is the food like?

The centre is used to catering for young people and school groups and, of course, all manner of dietary requirements. They will finalise their menu in discussion with us. A sample menu can be seen below (for a school who stayed 5 nights, 4 days). The centre also grows a lot of its own fruit and vegetables, so that what they serve is fresh and local.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast		A selection of cereals, yogurts, fruit, toast & eggs.			
Lunch		Macaroni Cheese with bacon, focaccia & spinach salad	Chicken wraps with sweet potato fries	Sausages with potato wedges peas & carrots	Packed Lunch
Dinner	Lasagne, garlic bread & salad.	Roasted Chicken thighs with mashed potato & Broccoli	Fish & Chips	BBQ	

What will they do whilst they are there? Do they get any free time?

There will be a huge variety of creative and physical activities led by staff during the mornings and afternoon. Although they know the staff, they will not be running activities that they would take part in whilst at school. This is most definitely not school!

Some of the activities are ones that all students will do together, whilst at other times students will get to choose a selection of activities from a 'menu'. None of the physical activities – for example, heading out in to the 200-acre grounds on a walk - will require students to be 'sporty' or to have to compete against one another. However, there will be the opportunity for those who want to, to do this too.

There will be plenty of free time during the day and at meal times, giving the opportunity for students to play and talk together, or to find quiet time if they need it. (We are conscious that some of the students have times of the day at which they would normally have time out in prayer, or just quiet time.) In the evenings, staff will lead activities and games for everyone to get involved with together, culminating in a party on the final night.

Whilst away, students will also take part in journaling at the start and end of each day, reflecting on their time in Key Stage 3 and preparing themselves for the next step of their education. This will be done in an interactive but prayerful way.

If my child does not go on the retreat, what will they do in school?

Usual lessons for year 9 will be suspended for the week. Depending on numbers, a timetable for students still in school will be drawn up. Any student not attending the retreat (we hope all will be able to take part) MUST be in school.

What time will they leave and return?

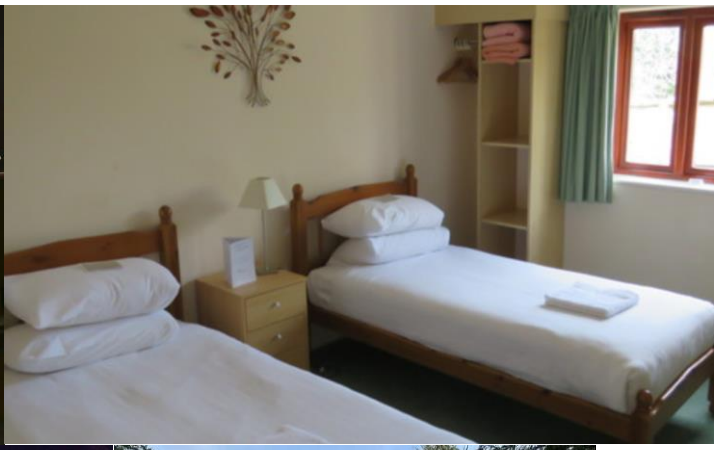
The coaches will leave at 8.30am on the Sunday morning and return mid-afternoon on the Friday. We are conscious that this is the last day of the half term and some families may be heading off on holiday on the Friday after school. We will, therefore, be back in able to make that possible.

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