



September 2020

Dear Parents & Carers,

I am writing to inform you that we have been able to successfully reschedule the New York trip 2021. Due to factors beyond our control, we feel that January 2021 runs the risk of too many uncertainties, particularly with no set date as to when travel between the UK and the US will resume again. I would like to thank you for your patience and understanding whilst we have been working behind the scenes to ensure that we can still provide a trip of a lifetime for our students. This letter will outline the details of the trip as there have been some changes to the original itinerary.

### **Trip details:**

The trip will now take place on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> July, returning on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021. We have had to move the outward-bound flight to an afternoon departure rather than a morning one. This does however mean we avoid the busiest times for customs at JFK and avoid rush hour traffic on the way to our hotel which often can add hours on to the journey. Thankfully we have secured a later flight for our return home, meaning we are able to have a full day in New York before heading to the airport on the final day. The details of the flights are below.

#### **Friday 16<sup>th</sup> July: LHR – JFK (Terminal 5)**

Flight number: BA113  
Departure time: 16.20  
Arrival time: 19.15

#### **Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July: JFK – LHR**

Flight number: BA172  
Departure time: 21.00  
Arrival time: 09.05 on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> July

There have been some slight cost implications due to rescheduling during the summer season where prices are significantly more expensive. We have worked incredibly hard to make this trip happen and have spent much time negotiating a price that we feel is still excellent value for money and affordable given the original price of £965. The new costing of the trip is £1025, an increase of £60 per person.

As mentioned in a previous letter, visiting New York in the summer means there are far more options for activities available to us that would not normally be on offer during the winter months. As a result, we have changed some of the original itinerary from the January trip to not only keep the costs down, but to adapt to what will be much warmer weather. We have also opted for a different hotel, which despite being of a higher standard, came in much cheaper rate than our original choice! The cost of the trip now includes:

- Flights from London Heathrow to JFK, travelling with British Airways.
- Transfers in the UK and US.
- 3 night stay in the Hyatt Place Times Square hotel which includes breakfast.
- Tickets to climb 'The Vessel' in Hudson Yards
- A ticket to a New York tourist attraction (tbc)
- Subway tickets.

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**Executive Head/CEO.**  
Mr G Fitzpatrick

**Head of School**  
Mr D Perry





We have removed the guided coach tour from the trip. During the summer months, spending prolonged periods of time on a coach is far from ideal. We will still visit the majority of the places we had planned to, along with many others which normally would not be an option for us.

We previously had included evening meals in the original price, however with the new costing and arrangements we will no longer be booking group meals for everyone to dine together. Whilst we would prefer to dine as a group, this often comes at an increased cost as group bookings in New York tend to be limited to set menus which are costly. Instead, students will be able to choose where they dine, but this will not be included in the price of the trip. There are countless of options for dining, and in the summer months this will mostly be done outside. Whilst we do not know what the situation with Covid 19 will be in July 2021, we are keen to plan ahead and consider the safest arrangements for our students and in this instance, we have made the decision to not organise group meals indoors. We will provide students with details of where they can eat, and there are many options which are extremely cost efficient. The Hyatt Place hotel however does provide students with a breakfast.

The exact itinerary of the trip will be finalized and shared in the run up to July 2021, but we expect it to include; a walking tour of NYC including sites such as Grand Central Station, Central Park, Fifth Avenue and a cable car ride to Roosevelt Island. Central Park is a must see in the summer, with many things on offer. A highlight of the trip will no doubt be climbing 'The Vessel' located in Hudson Yards, along with walking The High Line and heading down to south of the island to experience South Street Seaport and the Financial District, as well as visiting Ground Zero. On an evening, students will spend time in Times Square and Bryant Park which are surrounded by shops, restaurants and places to see. We will also provide students with a ticket to a tourist attraction in New York which will be decided once we have the full information of what is available to us.

In addition to this, we will be offering students a 'menu' of different activities that they can pick from should they wish. Some of these will require additional payments but are optional and students do not have to take part and there will be plenty of other options which are free of charge. These most likely will include things that can be booked in advance to secure much cheaper rates such as; the One World Observatory (approx. \$25pp) and a boat trip to Liberty Island (approx. \$20pp). Some activities can be paid for on the day as they cannot be booked in advance, such as hiring a small rowing boat on the Central Park lake (approx \$20 per boat). These activities can be selected and paid for closer to the time when we will be able to give you a full list of any additional activities that are not included in the price.

#### Payment:

As a result of the change of dates, this means that the payment schedule can therefore be amended. Students now have until Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April to pay the full cost of the trip. I would like to thank those who have continued to pay in accordance with the payment plan. If you would prefer to continue with this, then this is most welcomed. Please see the new payment schedule below. Experience tells us that having a payment plan which spreads out the cost of the trip is very helpful and avoids a large payment on the final date.

Friday 9<sup>th</sup> October: £250 paid  
Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November: £400 paid  
Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December: £500 paid  
Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January: £650 paid

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February: £800 paid  
Friday 5<sup>th</sup> March: £950 paid  
Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April: £1,025 paid

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### Next steps:

I ask that all students (or parents / carers on behalf of students) complete this short Microsoft Forms survey by Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September. [https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=qdUTV\\_BPVUGOO9qE3WcRKaPOzF9UlcNBk4t6L-1qB9pUOFJYWEM5T1Y3SVBFTjVURTQ3OVBEVEdCRC4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=qdUTV_BPVUGOO9qE3WcRKaPOzF9UlcNBk4t6L-1qB9pUOFJYWEM5T1Y3SVBFTjVURTQ3OVBEVEdCRC4u) Here, you will confirm one of two options:

- 1) To accept the new costing and arrangements for the trip in July 2021.
- 2) To officially cancel the place on the trip.

Should a student wish to cancel their place on the trip, we will start advertising their places to other students at the College. I ask for your understanding and patience in returning the funds you have already paid to you. In the event of a student cancelling, we will refund any monies paid in addition to the £150 deposit first. For example, if a student had paid £300 towards the trip, you will in the first instance receive £150 back into your Parent Pay account. We are optimistic that we will be able to fill the spaces of those students who no longer are able to come on the trip but cannot guarantee this. In the event that not all places are filled, equal amounts of the deposit payment will be refunded to all of those who cancelled. We are keen to minimize any losses for you and will work hard to advertise the trip to others. This process may not be able to happen instantly, particularly whilst we focus on welcoming students back to school after months of working from home.

For those students who accept the new costing and arrangements for the trip, please be reassured that the monies you pay after the £150 deposit remain in the New York account at St Mary's College. The previous funds paid to the tour company have allowed us to secure the new dates, flights and hotel stay and we have not had to pay any additional cost at this moment in time. We do not have to make any further payments to the tour company until the final balance is due. It is important to be mindful that despite moving the trip to July, it is dependent upon a number of external factors and so there is still a possibility that the trip could be cancelled nearer July. The situation in New York has improved dramatically, and we are hopeful that over the coming months and into next year, further improvements will occur.

### Documentation:

I will be asking for copies of passports to be brought into school from January 2021. Please do check that students have a valid passport. In the new year I will write to you and explain about the ESTA visa that students will need to obtain. This is done online and costs approximately \$14. This lasts for 2 years and does not need to be completed yet. If students have a passport issued from a country that is not on the ESTA visa list, they will need to organise their own visa. Please do not hesitate to get in contact with me if you are unsure of whether you qualify for an ESTA visa. Please use this website <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/tourism-visit/visa-waiver-program.html> to see if the country the passport was issued from is on the list.

I would like to thank you once again for your patience and support which has allowed us to make early decisions about the New York trip 2021. As always, the safety of our students remains our utmost priority. Please do not hesitate to contact me via telephone or via email [rflanagan@smchull.org](mailto:rflanagan@smchull.org) should you have any questions. For students, my office is based in the Sixth Form 'bubble' at the top of the stairs on the M corridor should they wish to come and discuss the trip further.

Yours Sincerely,

Miss R Flanagan  
Assistant Head Teacher

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