



June 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

I hope this finds you all well in these strange and uncertain times. Talking of 'uncertainties', we wanted to get in touch again before the end of the summer term to share some thoughts and possible options in relation to the New York trip which is still currently scheduled for January 2021. My previous letter stated that should we have any news from our tour operator we would keep you updated which we will endeavour to do at all times. Without the aid of the proverbial 'crystal ball', we are not in a position to know how things will be in relation to the Covid-19 virus in a few months' time, both in the UK and in New York. We have had an initial conversation with the rep from our travel company to understand our options and in the light of this we are keen to know your views and how you are feeling about things at the moment. This will inform our next steps.

In short, at this stage it seems we have three main options:

1. Carry on as planned pre Covid-19 and lockdown
2. Cancel the trip altogether
3. Postpone the trip for a few months

Everyone has paid a £150 non-refundable deposit. Cancelling at this stage means the loss of the deposit plus an additional £20, making a total loss per person of £170. The amount that will be lost increases significantly if cancellation takes place after October 2020. Some may feel that it is better to lose £170 now than perhaps £750 or so later on. It may be, of course that the company cancels the trip, in which case there ought to be no financial liability for families. However, at the moment, the flights are scheduled and booked as are the hotel rooms.

As we see it and as a result of the uncertainties, all of the options have potential benefits but also risks attached:

Option 1: Carry on as planned for January 2021 - this could be fine if flights go ahead and New York is safe from a Covid-19 point of view in January 2021. However, there are risks if tourist attractions are not fully open and if things change to the point that people want to cancel in November or December, by which time the cost of cancellation for each student will be significant.

Option 2: Cancel the trip - as previously discussed costs each student £170, a relatively modest proportion of the cost of the whole trip and obviously much better than losing a greater amount later on. However, there is a risk that this will be lost for no good reason if flights go ahead, the hotel is open and life in New York is back to normal (whatever that might mean in one of the world's most busy and crowded cities in the middle of winter?)

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Option 3: Postpone the trip for a few months - would mean we would negotiate a deferral of the trip until the summer – our hope would be for July 2021 before schools break for the summer (after A levels/Vocational assessments etc.), as it is not an option to go any later. We have always run this trip in the winter months to try to keep costs down in terms of flights and hotel rooms. It would be lovely to be able to go in the summer where more time could be spent outside in more Covid-19 safe way. This could be very exciting as there is whole range of things on offer that are simply not possible in the winter. However there is a risk that this could lead to an increase in the original full cost of the trip (flights are not yet released for July 2021), although we would obviously have longer to pay the full amount and indeed a choice as to whether to accept any price increase or not. We would of course do our very best to keep costs of the trip down and re-plan previously stated activities to be suitable for summer time, as well as liaise with you about any potential cost implications.

Before we resume negotiations with the tour operator, we would be very grateful if you could give us an indication of your thinking regarding the trip. To be clear, **we are not asking you to make a decision** but merely at this stage, to give us an indication of your thinking to inform our deliberations. Please therefore indicate in this very short survey

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=qdUTV_BPVUGOO9qE3WcRKaPOzF9UlcNBk4t6L-1qB9pUODJSMDVVQUxQWU1PSjc3VVQyM1E2U1dCTy4u which of the three options seems the best from your point of view. We will not be making any immediate decisions but will revisit this matter when we have a clearer understanding of the possibilities, by which time we will hopefully know and understand a little more. At this point, the need for a decision on which of the three options we intend to pursue, will be imminent.

Thank you for your patience and understanding in this matter. I am sure you appreciate that we could not envisage this crisis when we began planning this trip at the start of the year. Nonetheless, I assure you of our best efforts to take things forward in the most safe and practical manner.

Yours sincerely,

Miss R Flanagan
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