



## Oundle School

From: Mrs T Raftery



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**Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award**  
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Dear Parent,

As you may already be aware, your child has chosen to embark upon the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award this year.

I am, therefore, writing to inform you of some important aspects of the Award and its operation at Oundle School which will assist your child in successfully completing the Award by the end of this academic year.

The Duke of Edinburgh Award involves four sections:

Physical Recreation  
Skill  
Community Service  
Expedition

At Bronze level, participants are required to partake and develop in some form of Physical Recreation, Skill and Community Service for a period of at least three months on a weekly one-hour basis outside the academic School curriculum, and to continue with one of these activities for a total of six months.

At an independent boarding school, the circumstances of the participants are slightly different from those of state-sector day schools and arrangements have been made to accommodate these. This has been possible owing to the large number of participants we have, which allows Oundle School to become its own DofE Operating Authority. *Please note that this does mean, that when you read material published externally to Oundle School on the DofE Award, the conditions applicable to Oundle School may vary slightly.*

Oundle School DofE participants have a number of advantages over other participants throughout the country as most of the Award sections are offered to them as part of the normal working Oundle School life. Their involvement in afternoon games sessions immediately qualifies as their Physical Recreation activity. Musical instrument lessons (including singing lessons and singing in the choir) qualify as the Skill activity. For those pupils who are not musically inclined, then the many Voluntaries' activities operating on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 5 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. are also mostly suitable activities for the Skill section of the Award. For those who make the appropriate progress throughout the year (discussed below), the Expedition is also arranged for them and takes place during School time (the last week of the Trinity Quarter).

The only section which cannot be offered by Oundle School is the Community Service Section. This is because Oundle is a rather small community and cannot facilitate the large number of DofE participants (over 100 at Bronze level alone). *All Bronze participants are therefore required to complete the Service section of the Award from their home town/village.* Of course, for boarders, this means that they cannot possibly partake on a weekly basis in this part of the Award. Special arrangements have, therefore, been agreed between Oundle School and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. *Oundle School Bronze DofE participants are instead required to complete at least fifteen hours of valuable community service which spans a period of at least three months.*

The Service section of the Award, has, in the past, unfortunately caused a few problems because participants have failed to follow the rules accordingly. I would, therefore, like to take this opportunity to highlight a few points regarding this aspect of the Award:

- *The fifteen hours of Community Service carried out MUST span a period of at least three months from start to finish (the first hour to the last hour).* It cannot be done in one day, or even in one school holiday! This is to show a sustained, continuing level of commitment to helping the community (not just a one-off activity) as required by the external DofE Award Scheme.
- For purposes of the extensive planning required for the Expedition, *all pupils MUST have their fifteen hours of Community Service completed, and have handed in their letter and photograph (see below), by the first week of the Trinity Quarter (14 April 2008) for them to be registered to take part in the Expedition for that academic year.* This means that, taking holiday and Quarter-time in account, *they must have started their Service no later than the end of the Christmas holidays, and preferably before, to allow for unforeseen problematic circumstances.*
- The Community Service must be *obviously* valuable to the community. Service to family members or close family friends cannot be counted. Participants are encouraged to be adventurous with their choice of Community Service (walking a neighbour's dog is not considered to be sufficiently valuable to the community as a whole! I enclose a list of ideas of suitable Service activities).
- Having completed their Service, *all pupils must provide a letter, on headed paper, signed by their supervisor, stating what they did for their Service, the date they started their first hour, the date they completed their last hour, and how many hours they did in total. They are also asked to provide a photograph of themselves carrying out their Service and to get their Blue Record book signed.* (With such a large number of participants, it is not possible to visit them doing their Service in person, as would normally be the case.)
- These requirements may mean that family holidays have to be planned accordingly to allow your child to complete their Service hours, and pupils who live overseas may have to overcome language barriers or arrange to spend some time helping in the communities of UK friends or guardians.

- Unfortunately, in a society of ever-increasing litigation, it is becoming harder to find places which are happy to accept 13/14-year-olds as voluntary helpers. However, there are still enough places that do. It is a matter of employing some perseverance, but it would be wise to allow time to do so!
- Independence and initiative are underlying themes of the Award and as such it is important that your child embarks upon the Award with self-motivation. It is the pupils' responsibility to ensure that they complete their Service according to the requirements.

Whilst some of the above may sound rigid and daunting in places, I would like to reassure you that we have made every effort, within the requirements laid down by the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, to make the Award as accessible as possible to all pupils who wish to get involved. I have a strong, personal belief in the value of the Award, which is why I choose to voluntarily run the Bronze level of the Award at Oundle School, and I look forward to assisting your child in the accomplishment of it.

If you have any queries regarding the above requirements, then please feel free to contact me by email before Friday 12 October.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Trudie Raftery

### Suitable Community Service Activities

Assisting in a local primary school/pre-school/nursery  
Assisting in the Children's Ward of local Hospital  
Assisting with the running of the local Hospital Radio  
Assisting Elderly People in local Daycare Centre, Residential Home  
Working with people with physical/mental disabilities e.g. Riding for the Disabled  
Working with the RSPCA  
Working with the RSPB  
Conservation work in local area – Country Park, National Parks, Nat. Trust, English Heritage  
Environmental Work – through Tidy Britain Group, Local Recycling Centre  
Assisting in a local charity shop – OXFAM, Red Cross, MIND, Age Concern, Help the Aged

### The following may require a qualification first which may involve an age-limit

1<sup>st</sup> Aid Service in local area through St John's Ambulance or British Red Cross  
Fire Service in local area through local Fire Brigade Headquarters  
Police Service in local area through Community Safety sector of local Police Station  
Life Boat Service through RNLI

*This list is not exhaustive but it does supply some ideas and is a guide to the sort of activity which is suitable for the Service section of the Award.*