

Covid19 FAQs

Q Can the school run the Bronze Award safely during the Covid19 epidemic?

A We must be clear that nowhere is completely safe and no guarantees can be given, so students and families must make an informed choice. However, at all times we will follow school safety rules and act within national and local safety restrictions as they apply at the time. Since the Covid epidemic began in early 2020 we have completed the 2019-20 Bronze Award programme for 33 students, including training for and completing the expedition, while following the safety rules and restrictions applying at the time. We intend to do the same for the 2020-21 Bronze Award programme. More detail on how we will deliver Activities (Volunteering, Physical & Skill) and the Expedition is given in the questions below.

Q Will students definitely be able to complete their Bronze Award?

A In 2019-20 we completed the Bronze Award programme for 33 students, but we had to make changes to student Activities and to the Expedition to comply with Covid rules at the time (see questions below for details of changes). These were allowed by DofE and students completing their Bronze programme are receiving their full Bronze Award certificates. We are subject to the changing health situation and safety rules and so we cannot guarantee that we will complete the full Bronze Award in 2020-21. However, we believe that we probably can complete the full Bronze Award, whether in the “normal” way or by making changes similar to 2019-20.

Q Can students complete their Bronze Award without completing the Expedition?

A No, students must complete their three Activities (Volunteering, Physical & Skill) and their Expedition in order to complete their Bronze Award. However, this year DofE are awarding a Duke of Edinburgh’s Bronze Certificate (not the full Bronze Award) for completing the three Activities without the Expedition. Students could receive their Bronze Certificate this year and still go on to complete their Expedition in a future year, for example at College, in order to receive their full Bronze Award. Our intention is to give Sharples School students in 2020-21 the opportunity to complete their Expedition and their full Bronze Award, if possible.

Q Will Covid restrictions and changes mean that students get a lesser experience? Will it still be worthwhile? Why is the school running the Bronze Award this year?

A Yes, the Covid restrictions will make the range of student Activities more limited and students may have to compromise how they do them. Similarly, the restrictions on the Expedition (see questions below for details) may reduce some of the experience for students and we deeply regret this.

However, we firmly believe that in these difficult times, with opportunities and positive experiences for our young people being limited, it is all the more important to provide them with the opportunity to have the experiences that DofE will give them. They will still complete worthwhile and often new Activities of their own choosing, independently and with self-motivation, volunteering with their community, strengthening their physical capabilities and exploring a skill. They will still complete their Expedition, exploring the beautiful Lancashire countryside, working within their team of young people, independently finding their way, carrying their food and equipment and looking after themselves for two days outdoors. We are sure that this is worthwhile and, in fact, important.

Q Will you still be able to run the expedition?

A We think so, yes. We managed it in 2020-21. However, we only ran the qualifying expedition, not the practice expedition plus the qualifying expedition. We were also unable to camp overnight because of the restriction on school residential trips under government rules for re-opening schools in September 2020. We did everything else for the expedition, including walking, route-finding, cooking our own meals and even putting up and taking down our tents. We just didn't sleep in them.

Unless this restriction is lifted in the summer of 2021, we will again be unable to camp overnight and will have to run our expedition as two separate days with students returning home to sleep overnight in between. DofE approved our expedition and counted it as completing our Bronze Awards and we are sure that they would say the same in 2021 in similar circumstances.

If we can do so safely and within regulations at the time then we will run a full practice expedition and a full qualifying expedition with overnight camping, but this must remain subject to the changing Covid situation and regulations.

Q How will the three Activities (Volunteering, Physical & Skill) be affected by Covid restrictions?

A They will certainly be affected. DofE allowed flexibility in 2019-20 for students to change activities to ones compatible with lockdown rules. For example switching regular swimming at a swimming club to regular keep fit sessions at home with Joe Wicks. This meant that students were able to complete their three Activities in 2019-20 and similar flexibility will apply in 2020-21, where needed.



Therefore we expect that students will be able to complete their Activities in some form, but it will restrict the range of activities they can take part in and affect the quality of their experience. Again, we regret this, but believe that it is better to offer a restricted DofE experience than no DofE experience.

Volunteering Activities will probably be most affected, since before Covid many of our students volunteered at school clubs, working with younger students, or at primary school after school clubs, or old peoples' homes or sports clubs coaching younger age groups, etc. Of course these options are likely to remain restricted or unavailable due to distancing bubbles and other regulations. DofE flexibilities allowed online based volunteering and local community volunteering, perhaps helping elderly neighbours with shopping or gardening, etc. We will work with students to find suitable options, but inevitably the range of options will be restricted.

If you have other questions, please email i.davies@sharplesschool.co.uk .