

Silver Award - Frequently Asked Questions

Q As a reminder, what is The Duke of Edinburgh's Award?

A It is an award recognising the achievements of young people, which has been running for more than sixty years and now has more than 300,000 participants each year across the country. The DoE award is non-competitive and provides challenges, teamwork and opportunities for new experiences and gives recognition for achievements.

Q What is Sharples School's involvement?

A In 2018, Sharples School became a licensed centre for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Sharples School students are able to enrol with the DofE organisation and carry out their Activities supervised by Sharples School staff. School staff will lead and supervise the expeditions, lend some of the essential kit to students and provide training and preparation for the expedition.

Q Why did you setting up the Silver Award at Sharples School in 2022?

A We have set up and run the Bronze Award since 2018, with steadily increasing numbers, despite covid, and with a visible benefit to the students in their pride in their achievement, their independence, resilience and teamwork. We aim to build on this for our Bronze Award holders and give them the chance to take these qualities to the next level. Also, with Silver Award achieved at Sharples School, our students will be in a great position to undertake Gold Award at College or elsewhere. In 2022, 14 students undertook the Silver programme and expeditions at Sharples with great success and the Silver Award is now an established part of Sharples School.

Q How many places are available?

A We don't have a fixed limit and we will aim to include every student who understands and wants to take on the commitment and challenge of Silver Award. If we do have difficulty managing the number who want to do Silver then we would prioritise students who have already completed their Bronze Award.

Q What if I have done my Bronze Award, but not quite finished it yet. Have I missed my chance to do Silver Award?

A There may still be time, but you need to get on with it now and finish your Bronze Award, so you can start your Silver Award in good time to finish it. If you can't finish your Bronze Award by Christmas in Year 10 then speak to us to ask what can be done.

Q If I haven't done Bronze, can I still do Silver?

A If you have started Bronze, then you need to finish it before you can start Silver. However, if you haven't done Bronze at all then it would be possible to do Silver (this is called 'Direct Entry'), although it would obviously be better to have done Bronze first and gained experience and skills. If you are thinking of this, then there are two things to bear in mind. Firstly, read the information on this website carefully so you know what to expect. Attend information meetings and taster training walks and make sure it's a commitment you want to take on. This would be a bigger step up for you than for the students with Bronze experience. Secondly, the activity timescales are longer for Direct Entry students - see below on activity timescales.

Q How much will it cost?

A We ask for a £100 total contribution towards the costs of providing the award, including the school's annual DofE licence fee, individual student registration with DofE, campsite fees, transport for the expeditions, fuel for camp stoves and costs of maintaining the school's expedition equipment and kit store. This can be paid in manageable instalments over the year. We will ask for an initial payment of £30 at the start. For pupil premium/free school meals students the total contribution is £50 and the initial payment is £15. The second payment of £30 (£15 PP/FSM) will be due at the end of February and the third and final payment of £40 (£20 PP/FSM) will be due at the end of April. **Once paid, these payments are not refundable.**

Q What is not included in the £100 payment?

A As with Bronze, food and clothing for the training walks and expeditions is not included and must be provided by students and their families. In terms of specialist walking and camping equipment see the next question as we do lend some equipment.

Q Will I need to provide all my own equipment?

A As with Bronze, we will lend "core" equipment for all students from the school store of DofE equipment. This will include tents, camping stoves, stove fuel, maps

and compasses. Other essential equipment will include rucksacks, waterproof coats and trousers, walking boots, sleeping bags and roll mats and these are provided by students. We have some of these items available to lend to students who cannot provide their own, subject to availability including sizes. We will have a questionnaire for students asking about such equipment, what students will be able to provide and what they would borrow from us, if available. We will then see what equipment is needed and how much of this we have available to lend to students. However, with smaller student numbers at Silver, we expect to be able to lend most items you may want to borrow.

Q If I want to buy some equipment, is any advice or help available?

A Yes, our Expedition Kit List can be seen on the Expedition section of our website, so you know what is needed. There is also a Guidance for Buying Equipment which gives you advice about the sort of quality needed, where you might look and what it should cost. The Guidance tells you what you don't need as well as what you do and when cheaper equipment will be perfectly fine for what we will do. Your DofE registration will give you a discount card offering 10% or more off with retailers including GoOutdoors, Blacks and Millets. Other retailers may offer discounts too. Just ask.

Q How will the Activities be similar to Bronze Award?

A Much of the format and details of the Silver Award will be what you remember from Bronze Award. There are four equal sections (Volunteering, Physical, Skill and Expedition) and we will be working on the first three sections through the year with the aim of finishing them by the summer, so that the Expedition allows you to complete your Silver Award by the start of the summer holiday. The choice of activities in each section is similar to Bronze. Students must carry out their three activities regularly each week for an hour or more per week and record their evidence on edofe. As at Bronze, you can do all these activities at the same time, so if you start before Christmas you can easily complete all three by the summer holiday.

Q How will the Activities be different to Bronze Award?

A Timescales are a little longer. The Volunteering section must be for a six month duration and one other section (either Physical or Skill) must also be six months duration. The third section is for a three month duration.

Q How are activity timescales different for Direct Entry students (who have not done Bronze Award already)?

A For Direct Entry students, one activity must be for 12 months instead of 6. So the three activities would be for 12 months, 6 months and 3 months.

Q Can I do the same things for my Silver activities as I did for Bronze?

A It depends. No you can't do exactly the same thing in the same way. However, yes you can do the same activity provided you are showing a "step up" in level. That is easy for some activities, for example if you learned a musical instrument to grade 3 level at Bronze and this year for Silver you are working towards Grade 4. For other activities it may involve a discussion with us about exactly what you will do that will be a "step up" and you'll need to work with your activity assessor so they know what your goals are for that activity.

Q Are there any changes in the Activities requirements?

A We are making our Volunteering and Physical activities more rigorous, to improve student experience. For Volunteering we require students to do something outside their own wider family, for example in a charity or primary school or other organisation. We want our students to benefit from getting involved in their wider community. For Physical, students doing a solo activity such as walking, running or cycling will need to join an organised group, such as the school Running Club, or an athletics club, or Bolton Park Run, where an adult can coach them and be their assessor.

Q How will the Expedition be similar to Bronze Award?

A As at Bronze, the expedition is also based on groups of about 6 students, working as a team, independently planning, route-finding, supporting each other, carrying their tents and equipment, cooking their own hot meals on their camp stoves and sleeping together overnight in their tents. Students will build on their experience, confidence and skills gained on their Bronze expedition.

Q How will the expedition be different to Bronze Award?

A The expedition will be longer and a step up from Bronze. Students must attend two expeditions, the practice expedition and the qualifying expedition. Each will be three days and two nights and the expected "travelling" time per day is 7 hours rather than 6 for the Bronze expedition. The terrain will be a little hillier and wilder than at

Bronze, but not the rugged mountains of North Wales or the Lake District. That would be appropriate for Gold Award. For Silver we are looking at the Bowland area of Lancashire and the Peak District area of Derbyshire. Further details to follow.

Q Can I do any of my Activities in school?

A Yes, as with Bronze, provided it is not in lesson time. To qualify for DofE Activities, anything you do must be giving your own time, which can include breaks, lunches or before and after school. Examples that can qualify for the Volunteering Activity might be running sports practice sessions for younger students or providing Maths booster sessions for younger students. Similarly, you may be able to do your Physical or Skill Activity in school, perhaps with the school stage production, a sports team or a school club. Last year the Running Club was popular for students doing their Physical Activity and was good training for the expeditions too.

Q Will I need to stay after school?

A Doing your DofE Award comes with an expectation and commitment that you will go above and beyond the minimum requirements. So yes, you will quite often need to be in school outside the normal school hours for DofE reasons. Of course you would always have advance notice. Your three Activities are planned by you, so it is up to you whether these are in school or not. The preparation sessions for the expeditions will start in March and continue into the summer (see the Sharples DofE calendar on the school website). Silver Award students already have some tent and camp stove experience from Bronze. However they will be more involved in route-planning and equipment planning for their Silver expeditions. These sessions have to be after school. These will not usually take more than an hour after school and you would have plenty of advance notice.

Q I play netball for the school team. Is this a Skill or a Physical Activity?

A It can be either, but not both. If you choose it for your Skill then you'll need something else for your Physical Activity. Or vice versa. If netball is your Skill then you'll need to identify particular skills (eg shooting or catching and passing) which you are going to try to develop.

Q Will I be on my own in the Expedition?

A No, as at Bronze, the Expedition will be in teams of 5 or 6 students or so, planning, navigating and walking together and supporting each other. The team will

also camp together at the same campsite as the other teams. Tents will be three person tents shared by two or three students. Staff will be in the nearby area to supervise but we will not be walking with you, so we will not be guiding you or telling you which way to go. We won't let you get lost though and we will have control points to supervise potential risks, like roads. Staff will be camping at the same campsite with you.

Q Where will the Expeditions be?

A This is still being finalised, but we are looking at walking areas and campsites in Lancashire and in the Derbyshire Peak District. There are plenty of choices where we can spend three days in beautiful places close to nature. At Silver Award we will be walking on a mixture of lowland levels, farmland, woods, riversides, etc as we did at Bronze and hillier and more open countryside, but still on waymarked paths. We will not be going on rugged or mountain terrain at Silver Award level.

Q Will the Training Walks and Expeditions be in the school holidays?

A No, they will be at weekends, but they will be in term time, not during the school holidays. See the Calendar on this website for dates.

If you have any other questions, not answered above, please email:-

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