**Mission:Explore &Year 7 - Information**

Dear Parent / Guardian

Here are some details about an external scheme that we encourage our Year 7 Geography students to be part of. Of course, there is no obligation to take part but it can be a huge amount of fun.

**What is Mission:Explore? - http://www.missionexplore.net**

Mission:Explore is all about challenging you and people you know to try new things. It's about exploring in fun ways, asking questions and searching for answers. When you create an account on this website you can win points and earn rewards too.

We've created Mission:Explore to:

* help young people learn about places;
* encourage curiosity about the world;
* have a good deal of playful fun.

Young explorers can use this website to find activities that we call missions. When they mark a mission as complete they will win points which can result in earning rewards. Some points are won on trust while others require explorers to submit correct answers

The Geography Department at IST can create missions on Mission:Explore. The missions can be very varied, but can include hunting for animals, putting on performances and building dens.

**Why Mission:Explore?**

Mission:Explore can be used to help children to learn about places in creative ways. The missions are designed to be fun, challenging and inspirational. Mission:Explore can be used to:

* Inspire new ways to play, explore and investigate;
* Help learning through geography, art, history, science and other subjects;
* Uncover stories and facts, and;
* Be a place to record, track and share their progress.

On the website and in the books, you will find lots of missions for your children to complete. ***Many of them you can do together.***

To make the most of Mission:Explore it's a good idea to:

1. Register for an account. You don't have to, but that way you can record your efforts. Children aged 13 or under are required to join along with their classroom teacher so they can see what is going on.
2. Complete our safety training, just to be on the safe side (this is generally a homework task)
3. Do the missions that are of interest to you and leave the rest. This should be fun!
4. Plan ahead and download planned missions in advance. Even if you have a smart phone, many places have poor internet connectivity. You can download all of our missions as PDF files onto your Kindle, iPad, phone or other device before you leave.. you can also take notes with a pencil.
5. Take something to draw with and on. If you have a camera, sound recorder or other useful pieces of kit put them in your bag too.
6. Share your explorations! You can do this in person or in your explorer log (if you are 13 or over) and through Twitter and Facebook.

**Child safety**

We take child safety very seriously. Young people aged 12 or under are separated from all members of Mission:Explore who are 13-years-old or more.

In addition, anyone aged under 13:

* is required to provide a parent email address. Mission Explore will send a message to this email address which needs to be replied to before the account is opened;
* are asked to make up their explorer (display) name to keep their account anonymous. Young explorers can share their profile page but only their explorer name, scores and completed missions will be visible;
* cannot make or see comments, keep an explorer log or map locations. When they do reach the age of 13, the first five comments are pre-moderated by trained staff who have full enhanced CRB (criminal record check) certificates. A post-moderation flagging system is used for all further comments.
* every mission page has a link for reporting problems either to Mission:Explore or CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre) in the UK;

Once a child reaches the age of 13 they will automatically have access to all features on the network including commenting on missions, keeping an explorer log and mapping where they have completed missions.

It is a requirement that all missions are assessed for their levels of risk and benefit. Despite this, we advise you to make your own judgments before allowing children to complete any mission or exploration. You will be the best judge of what is reasonably safe for your child's level of experience and ability. In addition conditions can change quickly in places where missions are located and this is especially true in upland, exposed and coastal places. We encourage you to always plan ahead and to follow any local advice and codes, including the relevant Countryside Code.

**Who is Mission:Explore?**

Mission:Explore is based on some children's books that we made. The books are full of illustrated challenges and a perfect for slipping into the back pocket of a bag ready for a day of adventures (IST Year 7 students have access to these books in school). They have won awards too, including being a National Trust & Hay Festival Outdoor Book of the Year 2011 and a Pink Stinks approved stamp for being gender neutral. ***The Geography Collective*** (a partnership of over 25 teachers and educators) teamed up with the ***The Workshop***, a cutting edge design and development company in Sheffield, UK, to bring you this site.

Together we are a unique team who work together to help young people explore and see the world in new ways. We care about young people, what and how they learn. We think that learning in the real world, in real places and about real issues are vital to any childhood. By doing missions on this website we hope that your children will be a little more confident, happy, empathetic and knowledgeable.