



THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parents

5th November 2020

Ski-Trip February 2021

As we move forward into this half-term, with new Government announcements, the likelihood of next year's ski-trip taking place will be of concern to many of you.

Throughout this term we have sought advice from various sources including the Department for Education, the Association of British Insurers and even the school's own insurers.

Before half-term I wrote to the ski operator stating that the current Government Guidance for the Opening of Schools is to 'advise against domestic (UK) overnight and overseas educational visits.' I had sought direct clarification from the Department for Education, and they confirmed this advice. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office advised against all but essential international travel.

I concluded that we are not allowed to go and therefore sought a refund.

In reply, Skiteam 4 said that current travel guidance refers to imminent travel which is 'construed as meaning in the very near future' and does not refer to trips taking place in several months' time. They are working on the assumption that the trip will be running normally. However, 'should the present advice still be in place imminently prior to your travel date, generally meaning 2 days prior, the trip will have to be cancelled and your school will be entitled to a full refund.' The tour operator wishes to adhere to the commitments they have contractually made.

The options I have are as follows:

- (i) continue on the assumption that the trip is going ahead;
- (ii) cancel the trip at this time and pay 50% cancellation charges;
- (iii) reduced cancellation fee of 30% in combination with a confirmed 2022 booking.

All the options cost money and we have been trying to work out the best (or least worst) option in terms of liability. From the school's point of view option (ii) is the most expensive and it is not clear whether we could recoup reimbursement through insurance.

Some of the options would create liabilities between the school and the tour operator as well as with parents.

Having weighed up the various options, I propose the following:

The school works towards Option (i) on the 'assumption that the trip is going ahead.' However, we will not ask parents for any further payments. We would only consider this in the new year if there



is more certainty around school trips abroad going ahead. I would ask parents to aim to ensure that they have saved the remaining monies.

If the trip was not allowed to go ahead then all parties would be entitled to a full refund and we would actively pursue this.

If the trip was allowed to go ahead, we would ask for the remaining payment and would have to assume (in line with the tour operator) that non-payment would be in effect a cancellation on your part.

By working towards Option (i) the greatest share of the risk remains with the school. Although this is not my preferred use of expenditure, we seem to be stuck with the 'small print' associated with travel and holidays.

The decision does represent a 'calculated risk' for the school. Although I cannot see into the future any more than anyone else, I think recent developments make the trip even less likely than before and therefore I anticipate a refund.

However, this action does require Mr Harding to continue with the planning of the trip as normal and I would ask that you support him with this.

Thank you for your ongoing support with a situation that none of us could anticipate, let alone control.

If this raises any further queries, please let me know and we will do our best to move this forward.

Yours sincerely



P J Hurst
Headteacher