

Visiting Staff – Your Role at Kent Mountain Centre

Welcome to the Team!

General

Please talk to us, before, during and after your visit. We regard the good working together of visiting and centre staff to be the most important ingredient in providing a high quality outdoor education experience. We hope that you will find us a flexible organisation and one which is willing to learn from experience and to make improvements.

As visiting staff you are 'in loco parents'. The parents or guardians of your students have handed them over to your safekeeping for the week. Final decisions on the health, welfare and behaviour of your students are for you to make. You will probably be acting within the guidelines set by your Local Authority, school or other organisation in doing this. The staff at KMC would like to be helpful and supportive colleagues to you in your pastoral role.

Between staff meetings (ie between about 5.30pm and 8.55am), you are in charge of both the pastoral care of your students and the fabric and security of the premises at KMC. You are expected to supervise students who are doing duties in the wash up area. This is not part of the job of KMC staff.

Of course, KMC staff are available on the end of a telephone if you need help, and we have tried to collate useful information in the staff room. (The Welcome Pack etc.)

If something goes seriously wrong in the evening or overnight we would expect you to contact the emergency services directly (i.e. ring 999 for Fire, Police or Ambulance services), but we would like you to contact a senior member of KMC staff as well if it is at all possible. See Emergency Procedures adjacent to the telephone in the staff room.

We hope that in this 'out of hours' period you will feel able to uphold KMC rules.

We recommend that you make up your own rules (e.g. about bedtime, when students can be upstairs, be outside, watch TV etc) and we will give you our support in upholding them.

If you feel that some aspect of the programme means you will be taking more responsibility than you are comfortable with (for example, a camp which you are to lead) please let us know as soon as possible so that something can be done.

As a Youth Service establishment, we are a non-smoking centre. If you need to smoke, please do it outside the buildings.

Please lock all external doors and close and fasten downstairs windows before going to bed.

During the Activity Day

The KMC instructor will take responsibility for the safety of the activity session.

We hope that as visiting staff you will come out and take a full part in the activities, because our experience has shown that staff who do this enjoy themselves the most and build the best relationships with their students.

We know that many members of visiting staff worry about not being good at the activities. Again, our experience has shown that students invariably respond supportively when a member of staff is struggling with an activity, and are in fact impressed by the sight of one of their leaders 'having a go'. However if there are times when you are too tired or ill or there is some other reason why you cannot go out with an activity group, we will not apply pressure.

The instructors are willing to take out groups without a visiting member of staff, so long as the rules of the school or organisation do not preclude this. However, there may be some effect on where the group can go and what they can do if they have only one adult with them.

If you feel that you can tackle some activities but not others it is best to say so at the morning staff meeting, because we can then work around that.

We hope that when out on activities you will support the instructor in matters of general behaviour (acceptable language, not leaving litter, etc) and supervision. We would ask you to help the KMC instructors to keep the group focused by not using your mobile phone during sessions if at all possible.

You need to follow the same rules as the students (and the instructor!) in such matters as wearing a helmet etc.

We request that you will advise the instructor, from your knowledge of your own students, about health / special needs / behaviour / best approach for dealing with a particular student or group of students.

Please take charge of students' medicine and its administration during the day.

We ask that you will step out of the activity and take charge of a student who has to be withdrawn from the group because they are ill or injured or because their behaviour is unacceptable.

We hope that where you have specialist skills, such as being able to belay or perform canoe rescues, you will be willing to put your skills to use, under the guidance of the instructor, for the benefit of the group and the activity.

In the very unlikely event of the instructor becoming too ill or too badly injured to look after the group, it would usually fall to the visiting member of staff to take over the leadership of the group and to decide on and carry out a course of action.

This is why you will find that the instructor points out to you where the minibus keys have been put, the location on the map of the activity site, whether or not a mobile phone is being carried, escape routes and other relevant information.

However we would never expect a visiting member of staff to lead a group in terrain where they felt inadequately experienced to do so. In most cases, simply keeping the group together and warm and maintaining their morale until help arrived would be a good and adequate response.

Instructors find it difficult when visiting staff come along on an activity but do not wish to take a full part, or when they wish to move between two groups. This is because the instructor is responsible for your safety as well as that of the students, and also because if the students see an adult dipping in and out of an activity they may well lose their motivation and commitment and want to do the same themselves.

However, on some activities (usually the more static ones) it is easier than others to accommodate an accompanying adult who wishes to observe / film / take photos, so please discuss this with us in advance, so that we can make a suitable plan.

Mike Russell