

# **Report on the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Trip to Bournemouth**

ADAM LOVE

## **Introduction**

This report will outline some of the reasons that led to us changing language school for this year's trip and highlight the merits of this change; as well as introducing both a profile of the new language school and looking at the weekly schedule. Feedback in the form of student responses from an open-ended questionnaire will be introduced and evaluated, followed by a short overview of the two full day excursions. A revised timeline has also been created to assist the planning phase of future trips. This paper will then offer some observations regarding the role of student diaries and mobile phones in their current format, then highlight a few things that need to be considered for future trips. Finally, I will offer an overall assessment of this year's trip.

## **Why Change Schools?**

Firstly, on behalf of all involved in previous trips to Bournemouth, we would like to express in writing our sincere gratitude to all of the staff at Richard Language School (RLC), the language school we previously attended. Our decision to change language schools was in no means a reflection of how they run their school. After 18 years of taking our students to RLC it was certainly a difficult decision to change schools for this year's trip. Though we always had a great time at RLC, there were a couple of issues that led us to consider attending another school.

One of the benefits of studying at RLC was that it was a fairly small language school. This meant that it had a very warm family-like atmosphere where the staff always went out of their way to make us feel welcome. However, the downside to it being a fairly small school was that the nationality mix was fairly limited. This meant the balance of Japanese students in each class outnumbered any other nationality. Before setting off to study in England, many of our students often commented on how much they were looking forward to experiencing a cultural exchange with many foreigners. However, comments made in their diaries during the trip expressed their disappointment in having only a few foreigners in their classes to interact with. Whilst none of our students registered an official complaint, the comments in their diaries were a cause of concern.

Another issue was the disparity in location of where each student was placed with their host families. While some students could walk to RLC in a few minutes, others had a 30-minute bus ride. Those students had no choice but to purchase a bus pass, which added quite a significant expense to their trip. It also meant they had to leave their home earlier to arrive at school on time and would also get home a lot later as well. Although there wasn't much RLC could do about it as Bournemouth is a very popular place in summer, and the number of host families available struggles to meet the demand for them, we couldn't help but feel sorry for the students who had to commute on public transport to attend the language school. It created a disparity amongst the students that ideally, we could avoid. These points led us to consider a move to a larger language school in the Bournemouth area.

### **Southbourne School of English**

A somewhat fortuitous introduction led to the Managing Director of Southbourne School of English (SSE), Paul Gallina, visiting Chufu in February. He introduced his school to the International Committee, and those in attendance were all sufficiently impressed enough to decide on studying at SSE for the 2019 trip. There were many positive aspects to studying at SSE. The school itself is a family run school that was established in 1966. It is located on the south coast of Bournemouth in a suburb of Bournemouth called Southbourne. The school is located in a beautiful residential area of Southbourne, just a 5-minute walk from the local high street and a 10-minute walk from the award-winning Southbourne beach (it was awarded the 2016 Blue Flag status which is a mark of quality, cleanliness, safety and environmental management).

The school has an excellent atmosphere that is generated by their friendly and enthusiastic staff. They have interactive whiteboards in all of their 23 classrooms and have the capacity for 330 students during the summer season. Crucially, the school addressed the concerns we had with RLC as they have a fantastic nationality mix with students from over 50 countries attending the school each year, and all of the home stay accommodation is within walking distance of the language school. Also, from a teacher's perspective, Southbourne is a much smaller and quieter location than Bournemouth, so it is a lot easier to help our students if a situation ever arose where they needed our assistance or guidance.

### **Example of a Weekly Schedule**

The junior and adult programmes offered at SSE contain a wide range of fun activities for

students to participate in. The students on the adult course also enrolled in the intensive course, which meant they had an extra hour of lessons each day. Below is a copy of the schedule for our first week on both programmes.

### Junior Summer Programme 28<sup>th</sup> July – 4<sup>th</sup> August 2019

Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup>	Arrival of students			
	Morning 09:00-13:00	Lunch 13:00-14:00	Afternoon 14:00-17:30	Evening (optional)
Monday 29 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> day: 08:15 Check in Entrance test Coach tour of local area	Lunch at school	Walking Tour of <b>Southbourne</b> and Beach games	Free time with host family
Tuesday 30 <sup>th</sup>	Bournemouth quiz and beach		Lessons 14:00-15:00 15:15-16:15 16:30-17:30	17:30-21:00 Splashdown
Wednesday 31 <sup>st</sup>	Basketball or Badminton or Swimming at BCS			18:30-22:30 Disco
Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup>	Castlepoint shopping centre			19:00-21:00 Bowling
Friday 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Choice of: Tennis or Football			Free time with host family
Saturday 3 <sup>rd</sup>	08:00 -19:30 Full day excursion to Oxford including walking tour			
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup>	Full day optional excursion to <b>Warwick Castle</b> and <b>Stratford Upon Avon</b> (GBP 45.00)			

### Adult Programme 28<sup>th</sup> July – 4<sup>th</sup> August 2019

Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup>	Arrival of Students			
	Morning 08:45-12:15	Lunch/Intensive 12:30-13:45	Afternoon 14:00-17:30	Evening (optional)
Monday 29 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> day: 08:15 Check-in Entrance test Coach tour of local area	Intensive lessons (if booked) 12:30-13:45 (Mon-Thu) 12:30-13:30 (Fri)	Walking tour of <b>Southbourne</b> and beach activities for new students	Free time with host family
Tuesday 30 <sup>th</sup>	Lessons 08:45-09:45 10:00-11:00 11:15-12:15		Football, Rounders and Frisbee	17.30-21.00 *Splashdown
Wednesday 31 <sup>st</sup>			<b>Hengistbury Head</b> nature walk	18.30-22.30 *Disco (under 18's) *New forest pub (18+)
Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup>			Beach volleyball and Beach football	19:00-21:00 *Bowling
Friday 2 <sup>nd</sup>			<b>Castlepoint</b> shopping centre	Free time with host family
Saturday 3 <sup>rd</sup>	08:00 -19:30 Full day excursion to <b>Oxford</b> including walking tour			
Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup>	Full day optional excursion to <b>Warwick Castle</b> and <b>Stratford Upon Avon</b> (GBP 45.00)			

## **Feedback on the Trip**

The students are usually required to submit a report upon their return from the Bournemouth program. However, as this was the first time that we had conducted a trip to SSE, Mamiko sensei and I felt it would be advantageous for future trips if we asked them to critically evaluate the trip in the form of an open-ended questionnaire. We encouraged them to share their thoughts and opinions of the trip. It is important to understand this trip from a student's perspective. The answers they gave proved extremely helpful and will certainly benefit next year's program. They offered an invaluable insight into how we can prepare them for the challenging aspects involved in an overseas homestay experience. Below are some of the key responses that will assist next year's trip.

### ***Question 1: What advice would you give to any student going to Bournemouth next year?***

- Take a small / folding umbrella.
- Take a small towel (for wiping sand off your feet after the beach).
- Many lessons at the language school are based on social issues so try to read some newspaper stories before you go to England.
- Take a credit / debit card as you can use them anywhere.
- Make an Instagram account (almost all foreigners use Instagram so it's a great way to make friends and stay in touch with people after the trip).
- Practice making origami as it is a fun activity to do with your host family.
- Don't take too many clothes as there is not much space in your suitcase when you come back to Japan. This is because I bought so much omiyage!
- Don't hesitate – talk to foreign students as soon as you can. Don't worry about making mistakes.
- You might want to take some swimwear.
- Take some long-sleeved shirts as it can be cold in the morning and evening.
- Take a flask or a water bottle. It means you won't need to buy a drink each day!
- Take some Japanese snacks to give to people. It's a great way to break the ice and is a good conversation starter. I recommend green tea flavoured Kit Kats.

There were multiple answers to the above question. All of them will be incorporated in the seminars before this year's trip. A lot of the responses were in regards to what clothes they should take, but there were also some great suggestions for activities to enjoy with a host family.

## **2: What did you think about Southbourne School of English?**

- *“It was great! The environment was very comfortable. The teachers were very kind, and the lessons were very interesting”.*
- *“There are many students from different countries so I could experience and learn about a lot of different cultures. Also, the teachers were very kind, so I enjoyed speaking English during lessons”.*

The response to this question was overwhelmingly positive. There were actually only a few slightly negative responses to this question. In each case though, the issue was the content of a lesson that a student believed was too difficult. There were no issues with the quality of teaching or the school itself. The overall impression was that SSE was a lovely, clean school that provided them with a platform to enjoy themselves and make new friends.

## **3: What should you do before you go to Bournemouth?**

- *“I think it is important to send an email to your host family before you go to Bournemouth. It is good manners and it is nice to start communicating with them before you arrive in Bournemouth”.*
- *“You need to research things about Japan so you can talk to foreigners about them in English”.*
- *“I joined an after-school English class taught by native teachers at Chufu. It is important to try to speak a lot of English before you go to Bournemouth”.*

For this year's trip I think it is important to encourage the students attending to sign up to the after-school conversation classes run by the native teachers at Chufu. It also may be worthwhile conducting more conversational activities in the seminars before leaving for Bournemouth. Many of the students commented that a lot of the content of their lessons was based around global issues. It may be a good idea to encourage them to read news stories so they are familiar with current issues and significant news stories.

#### ***4: How much money do you think you need on this trip?***

¥30,000	¥60,000	¥50,000	¥30,000	¥50,000
¥40,000	¥42,000	¥30,000	¥60,000	¥50,000
¥30,000	¥40,000	¥31,000	¥40,000	¥30,000
¥40,000	¥30,000	¥25,000	¥30,000	¥40,000
¥50,000	¥20,000	¥50,000	¥60,000	¥50,000
¥50,000	¥40,000	X	X	X

Average = ¥40,200

During the final seminar before we set off for Bournemouth, many parents ask how much money their child will need on this trip. It is almost impossible to answer as each family has their own individual financial situation. This question was asked in an attempt to work out an overall average that students spent / took with them during this year's trip. Three respondents did not answer this question, but from the 27 that did the average was 40,200 yen. On the subject of money, it is also worth mentioning that all meals are included in this trip. At RLC host families provided breakfast and an evening meal. At SSE lunch is included in the cost of the trip. This means that students only need money for extra-curricular activities, souvenirs and any items they buy for themselves.

Other helpful comments were:

- *"We can spend money during activities and after school, but the main thing I spent my money on was presents!"*
- *"I recommend using a card. It's easy to know how much money you are spending and is easier than trying to figure out English money in front of a cashier".*
- *"It was easy for me to use my debit card, so I didn't take a lot of cash".*

It is worth highlighting that you can use a credit card almost anywhere in the UK. Actually, British consumers spent more money on credit cards with UK retailers last year than they did in cash. Britain is rapidly becoming a cashless society. Taking a card is also a safer option than taking a lot of cash on this trip.

#### ***5: Do you think your English skills have improved after this trip? Why?***

- *"Yes, of course. I became a lot more confident in speaking English. My overall Eiken test*

score improved a lot after this trip”.

- “I think so because I used English all the time in Bournemouth. I still speak English to many of my friends that I made in Bournemouth on SNS”.
- “Yes. Since going to Bournemouth, I have been to Singapore. I found it much easier to communicate with people in English as I am more confident now”.

Actually, all of the students who responded to this question believed their English language skill had improved to some degree as a result of attending the Bournemouth trip. This is not so surprising as they do spend a vast majority of their time in England speaking English to their host families or foreign classmates. Encouraging them to speak English to each other still remains the biggest obstacle throughout this trip.

There are many reasons for joining the Bournemouth trip, from experiencing a cultural exchange and gaining an understanding of life in a foreign country to improving your English language skills. The latter is what most parents are concerned with and often ask how much we believe their child’s language ability will improve. One of the nicest things about this trip is witnessing our students growing in confidence as the trip progresses, but it is important to understand the role that language plays within that, and how they perceive their language skills progressing during this trip.

### ***6: What were your top three activities at Southbourne School of English?*** **(In order)**

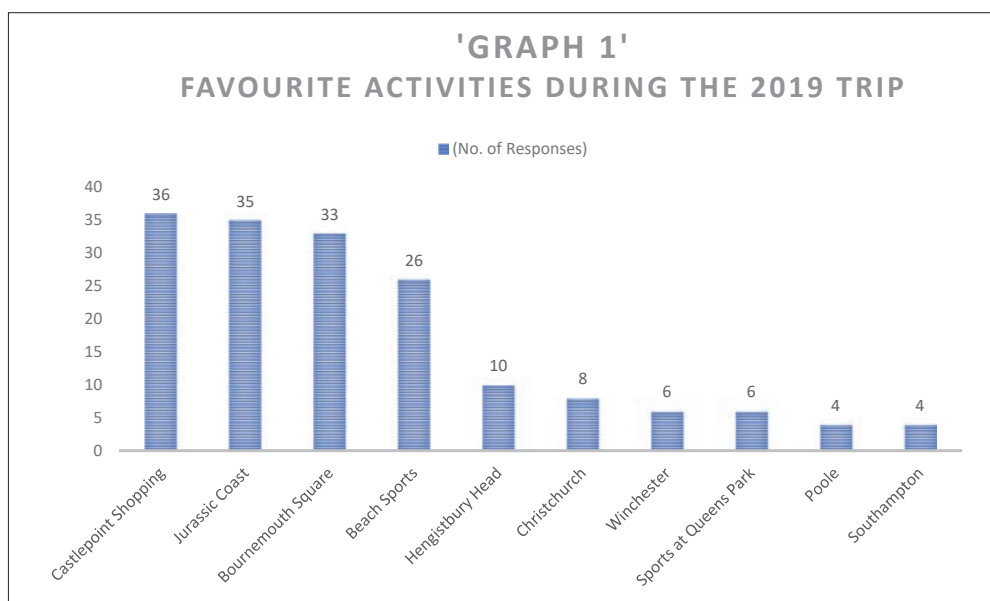
The SSE programs offer a wide variety of activities for students on the Junior and Adult programs. They include a large selection of sports, trips to the beach, visiting beautiful sightseeing spots and chances to go shopping. At times (especially on the adult program), the SSE staff even asked us if there was any place in particular that we wanted to visit. It was interesting to find out which activities our students enjoyed the most, so on their questionnaires they were asked to rank their top three activities in order.

3 points were awarded for their first choice.

2 points were awarded for their second choice, and

1 point was awarded for their third choice.

The results can be seen in 'Graph 1'.



Based on the responses to this question, there were four very popular answers. Luckily, three of these activities were ones that students could participate in more than once (the Jurassic Coast being the exception). The remaining six activities were only offered once during the trip. Also, only students on the Junior programme went to Winchester as poor weather meant the activity was cancelled on the Adult programme.

*Some answers were omitted as they responded with Oxford or London. These were omitted as they were one day excursions and not technically part of the social activity programmes run by SSE.*

At the end of this report a comprehensive list of QR codes linked to the homepage of each of the activities we went on during this year's trip has been added. It would be beneficial to any teacher attending future trips to familiarize themselves with each activity.

The final question on the questionnaire gave each student the chance to let us know if they had anything else (positive or negative) about the trip. Variations of the following answer summed up the attitude of this year's group:

*"This trip became a great part of my life. I made many foreign friends, tried a lot of wonderful*



*food and had many great experiences. I realized how lovely international friendships are. I'm very happy to have experienced so much in a short space of time".*

## **Full-Day Excursions**

There are also two full day excursions on this trip, Oxford and London. They are separate to the social activities. Both excursions were extremely popular, and the students all appeared to enjoy a mix of sightseeing and shopping. The first excursion was a trip to Oxford. We started as a group and enjoyed a guided walk around the city. After that, the students had some free time and many of them visited Christchurch, a location made famous as some scenes in the film 'Harry Potter' were shot there. After that, we went to various museums, cafes and shops. Christchurch appears to be getting more and more popular each year, especially with international visitors. Our students would be devastated if they weren't able to visit Christchurch, so it is highly recommended that the tour operator reserves a booking for the Chufu group *before* we set off.

The second excursion was a walking tour of London. It is important to ensure the students all have practical walking attire as we walked just over 12 kilometres that day. Many students expressed a desire for more free time in London, though due to safety concerns it is almost impossible to allow this. We did give the students some free time at the British Museum. Time constraints meant that we did spend most of the day walking and taking in the sights and atmosphere of London. We were extremely lucky that the guide provided to us by SSE, Tom Godwin, was incredible. He is a teacher at SSE and studied at a university in London. His knowledge of both London's famous monuments and the city itself certainly contributed to our students having a wonderful time. The only slight disappointment for the students was that Big Ben is currently undergoing major repair work that will not be finished until 2021, so we couldn't get any pictures of one of London's most famous landmarks.

## **Trip Planning – Timeline**

As the 2019 program was our first time with SSE it felt necessary to create a timeline to help future programs run smoothly. Below are all aspects of planning including what action needs to be taken, a timeline regarding when each action needs to be completed by and who is responsible for ensuring it gets done.

Action	Date	Responsibility
Email SSE for a quote	December	Love sensei
Email Mory House B&B for a quote / reserve 2 x rooms	December	Love sensei
Request quote from tour companies	Early April	Chufu
International Committee meeting (decide which tour operator to use for this year's trip)	Early April	Chufu
Bournemouth seminar (1) (reserve audio visual room for that day) <i>*Prepare handouts &amp; video overview.</i> <i>** Hand out the waivers from SSE</i>	Last Saturday in April	Chufu
Ask SSE for itinerary	April	Tour operator
Collect student passport information.	Early May	Tour operator
Collect the waivers	Early May	Tour operator
Collect a copy of teacher's passports. (photocopy and send to tour operator)	Early May	Chufu & Tour operator
Confirm number of students attending the program. <i>*Advise any student who does not currently have a passport to apply for one.</i>	Early May (after Golden Week)	Chufu
SSE enrolment forms (Excel spreadsheet) <i>*complete as soon as possible as they contain the information on any allergies. The sooner we can give SSE this information the more they can assist us.</i>	Early May	Tour operator
Bournemouth seminar (2) (reserve audio visual room for that day) <i>With tour operator, students &amp; parents.</i> <i>Make presentation groups (music, culture, food, etc.)</i>	Early June	Chufu & Tour operator
Student Group Presentations	End of June (reserve the LL room)	Chufu
Create a blog for the trip (before the third meeting)	Early July	Chufu
Employer's confirmation letter (criminal background check)	Early July	Chufu
Bournemouth seminar (3) <i>With tour operator, students &amp; parents.</i> (reserve audio visual room for that day)	Early July	Chufu & Tour company
Create student name list for checking diaries	Early July	Chufu
Student Questionnaire (feedback on the trip)	End of trip / start of 2 <sup>nd</sup> term	Chufu
Culture Festival	Start of 2 <sup>nd</sup> term	Chufu

## **Student Diaries & Mobile Phones**

One of the conditions of joining the Bournemouth trip is that each student has to submit a diary upon their arrival at the language school each day. They are expected to write half a page in English, and half a page in Japanese. The diaries give the students an opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences with us during the trip – as well as providing a platform for them to let us know if they had any issues or concerns. This was never an issue on previous trips at RLC, as our students took English classes from 09:00 – 15:30. This meant the teachers had plenty of time during the day to go through the diaries and offer their thoughts, opinions and any advice if required.

However, at SSE students under the age of 16 are classed as minors, and for legal reasons must enrol in the junior programme. This meant 11 of the 30 students who attended this year's program had to enrol in the junior programme (the other 19 enrolled in the adult programme). The main difference between the two programmes is the scheduling. The junior programme runs activities in the morning and English lessons after lunch, and vice-versa for the adult programme. This meant there was not a lot of time to check the student's diaries as SSE policy states that any student enrolled in the junior programme must be supervised at all times. The programmes at SSE are a lot more 'hands on' for the teachers and checking the diaries on this year's trip actually put an unnecessary strain on our ability to affectively run the trip. This year's trip was also the first time our school permitted students to bring their own mobile phones to the UK. We also pre-ordered mobile phones from a phone shop in Bournemouth called EE. This meant the students were able to either call us directly on their UK phones, or contact us via the SNS application LINE. The role of the diaries in their current format certainly needs to be discussed before next year's trip.

## **A Few Things to Consider for Future Trips**

At first glance the quote from our tour operator looked very reasonable. However, the timing of the return flight (09:00) meant we had to spend our last night in a hotel near Heathrow Airport. This added an extra expense to the overall cost of the trip, which was slightly embarrassing as we had already given the parents a final quote. Staying in a hotel was our only option as the alternatives were either catching a bus at 23:00 and waiting at Heathrow Airport from 02:00 – 09:00 or leaving Southbourne at 05:00 to arrive at Heathrow for 07:00 (two hours before we could check-in for our flight). Again, this was not an option as the school is in a residential area and it would've caused too much noise. It also meant that the host families would need to drop

our students off at the school at 05:00, which would've been too much to ask. It is recommended that all future trips take the flight time into consideration by setting a certain time frame for the flights to avoid this scenario.

As previously mentioned, we ordered each student a mobile phone from a company called EE. We collected the mobile phones from EE on the first Monday morning of the trip while the students were taking their placement tests. On previous trips we allocated the students mobile phones as a safety precaution, as they were not allowed to bring their own phones on the trip. However, as they are now permitted to bring their own mobile phones on this trip, and there are many WIFI spots in England, it is worth considering whether we need to continue to purchase mobile phones for the students. It is also worth considering the environmental impact on purchasing a phone for three weeks and then discarding them as they have no resale value.

Chufu school policy states that only one teacher can attend the Bournemouth program if there are less than twenty students. This was the case in 2018, when I ran the program with a tour guide from H.I.S. However, as mentioned earlier in this report, the different schedules on both the Junior and Adult programmes means this could be problematic in the event of a student becoming ill, or in the event of an accident / emergency situation.

I believe a discussion with the International Committee needs to be had with regards to hiring a more experienced tour guide (preferably with some expertise in working on overseas programs with high school students). Though it would add to the overall expense of the trip, we are placing them in a position of trust, and we need to know we can rely on them.

One of the few negative aspects of this trip was where our tour guide stayed. Our tour operator placed her in a fairly remote part of Boscombe, which was quite far from where we were based in Southbourne. Fortunately, there were no serious issues that we had to contend with on this trip – though if an emergency situation that required urgent assistance had arisen, it would've been impossible for the tour guide to respond quickly. The simple solution would be to insist that the tour operator we select is located within the Southbourne area along with the rest of us. It could actually significantly reduce the cost of the trip if the tour guide were to stay with a local host family – though whether they would be willing to stay with a host family could be a point of contention for them.

## **Final Thoughts**

Everyone at SSE went out of their way to make us feel as comfortable as possible. In the few circumstances where a minor problem did occur, the staff swiftly dealt with it in a professional and affective manner. Paul Gallina told us they close each year in winter during the offseason and refurbish the school. It certainly shows, as the school is incredibly clean. All things considered, the decision to change language schools for this year's trip was the correct one. Being located in Southbourne means it is a lot easier to manage the overall programme. Southbourne is a lovely area and feels safer. Students not having to rely on public transport to get to and from school also reduced the level of stress and meant they were able to quickly settle into the area. Having the lessons and activities into one programme meant there were plenty of opportunities for our students to interact with both each other and the other international students. The activities were also varied and interesting and kept the students engaged. Overall SSE offers the perfect platform for our students to enjoy and immerse themselves in a British way of life.

## **Special Thanks**

I would to take this opportunity to thank the two teachers who assisted me on this year's trip – Mr. Hide Kobanawa & Ms. Mamiko Miura, both of whose enthusiasm, energy and willingness to go above and beyond to assist our students ensured that the Bournemouth program was a fully rewarding experience for all of those involved. I would also like to place on record my sincerest thanks to all of the staff at SSE – especially the Managing Director, Paul Gallina and the Academic Principal, Kathryn Newman.

A special mention also needs to go to Mr. Akira Saito, who helped in the initial planning of this trip.



Southbourne Beach



Hengistbury Head



Afternoon Tea in Bournemouth



Jurassic Coast



Host Family





Sports at Queens Park



Jurassic Coast



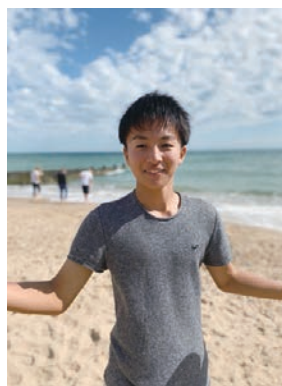
Oxford University, Oxford



The British Museum, London












Christchurch, Oxford



Southbourne Beach

## Activities - QR Codes

<p>Beach sports</p> 	<p>Sports at Queens Park</p> 	<p>Christchurch</p> 	<p>Hengistbury Head</p> 
<p>*Winchester (junior course only)</p> 	<p>Southampton</p> 	<p>Poole</p> 	<p>Jurassic Coast</p> 
	<p>Castlepoint shopping</p> 	<p>Bournemouth Square</p> 