

Report on the 20th Annual Trip to Bournemouth

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⟨Keywords⟩ homestay language school feedback programme Bournemouth
sightseeing

Introduction

As a school, we were delighted to be able to offer the Bournemouth programme for the first time since 2019. This report will outline how the trip has changed since the coronavirus pandemic. It will also explain how we had to amend the selection process due to the large number of applicants. Student feedback administered through a Google Form will be introduced and evaluated, followed by some advice that will benefit any student attending next year's programme. This report will then present an updated version of the trip timeline and how we evaluate the student diaries, before focusing on some of the key issues that need to be resolved before the next trip. This report will conclude with some final thoughts reflecting on how the overall programme went during this year's trip to Bournemouth and Southbourne School of English (SSE).

How has the trip changed since the coronavirus pandemic?

The most noticeable difference on this year's trip was that many of our students were sharing a room together. On previous trips we have paid extra money to ensure our students had a private room, but since COVID, the language school industry appears to have changed a great deal. There are notably fewer host families in the Bournemouth area, as people are using travel sites like Airbnb to generate extra income. This has led to language schools having to accept shared rooms to remain competitive.

However, any worries or reservations we may have had before the trip were mainly alleviated by the feedback that we received from this year's participants based on a Google Form survey. The responses from our students showed they prefer being together as they could help each other. There also didn't seem to be an issue regarding staying with people of other nationalities. This also seemed to receive more positive feedback. The one rule we did insist upon is that no more than two of our students were placed with the same host family.

Selection Process

As the restrictions on travelling outside of Japan were officially lifted in April 2023, we did anticipate more interest in this year's program, though it was still a pleasant surprise to have so many applicants. A total of 74 students applied to join the Bournemouth trip, though we could only offer 35 places.

We usually ask each candidate to complete a written application form that we hand out during the introductory seminar (see below). However, in the interest of fairness and ensuring that everyone had an equal chance to be selected, the International Committee decided to conduct individual interviews that would be in both Japanese and English. Each interview was 7-minutes, and each student was asked questions from a pre-determined list.

The interviews were conducted from May 6th to May 10th. All interviews were recorded to aid the selection process as much as possible. It was very difficult to separate some of the candidates, so in future it may be worthwhile to ask the homeroom teachers to share any thoughts they have regarding a particular student and how they think they would approach the Bournemouth trip.

この研修に応募しようと思った理由は何ですか？

(Why did you decide to apply for this training?)

この研修に参加して、具体的にどんなことをしてみたいですか？

(What specific things would you like to do after attending this training?)

あなたのことが伝わるような具体的エピソードを入れた自己PRをしてください。

Please include a personal statement with specific episodes that convey who you are.

Saturday 05th May (12:30 - 14:00)			
Lower seminar & Murakami seminar			
Interview Time:	Name:	Interview Time:	Name:

Tuesday, 09th May (15:20 - 17:30)			
Lower seminar & Murakami seminar		Mitsui seminar & Beamoto seminar	
Interview Time:	Name:	Interview Time:	Name:

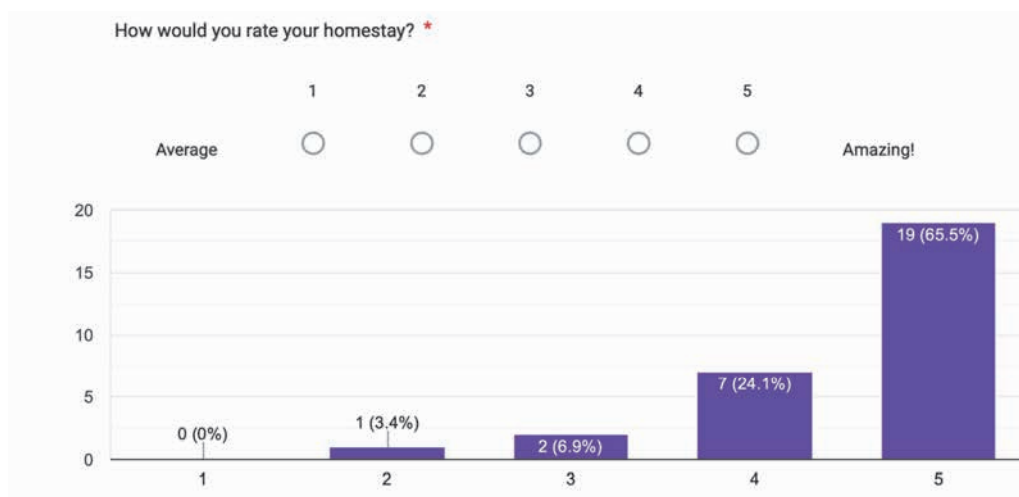
Wednesday, 10th May (15:20 - 16:40)			
Lower seminar & Murakami seminar		Mitsui seminar & Beamoto seminar	
Interview Time:	Name:	Interview Time:	Name:

Student Feedback

The overall feedback was extremely positive. The activities were varied enough to ensure that each day was exciting.

One minor complaint was received during the first few days. Some of our students felt that their class wasn't mixed with enough students from other countries, and as a result it felt like a 'Chufu' lesson. This was slightly problematic as we do advertise this trip as giving our students the chance to speak to people of many different nationalities.

However, when we approached Alison, the Assistant Director of Studies, she was more than willing to assist us and combine that class with a slightly higher-level class containing more students of other nationalities.



As previously mentioned, this was the first trip where students were being placed in the same host family, so we were anxious to see if there would be any issues. The data suggests everyone enjoyed themselves and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with only one respondent scoring their host family with what could be classed as a negative response. The reason they gave was their host family went to bed too early, which is quite difficult to criticize – especially as the student who gave this score was generally out until the 21:00 curfew time most evenings.

Other than the one slightly negative comment, the rest of the feedback was generally very positive:

I was able to spend time with a very friendly host father, a kind host mother, children around the same age, and a cute dog. Their friends came to their house every weekend, and when they had barbecues I was able to talk to them. When I got lost on the way home, the sun was setting, and they couldn't use their cell phones, they were worried and waited for me near their house. The only difficult thing was that their house was far from the school and shopping district.

My host family was super kind, and hostmother was good at cooking. Also, my host father was funny and handsome! However, we didn't so much time to spend much time together. So, I wanted to spend more time together more.

I could share the same house with my friend. The house and our room was large and clean and our host family was very kind. But they often left us alone (with their good intentions).

My host mother works at the school cafeteria so she made us very delicious food everyday. They took us to the beach every weekend and that was so fun.

As a member of a host family, I was able to experience life abroad and practice authentic English conversation.

Our host family was very nice and kind for us. Especially, the meals were delicious!

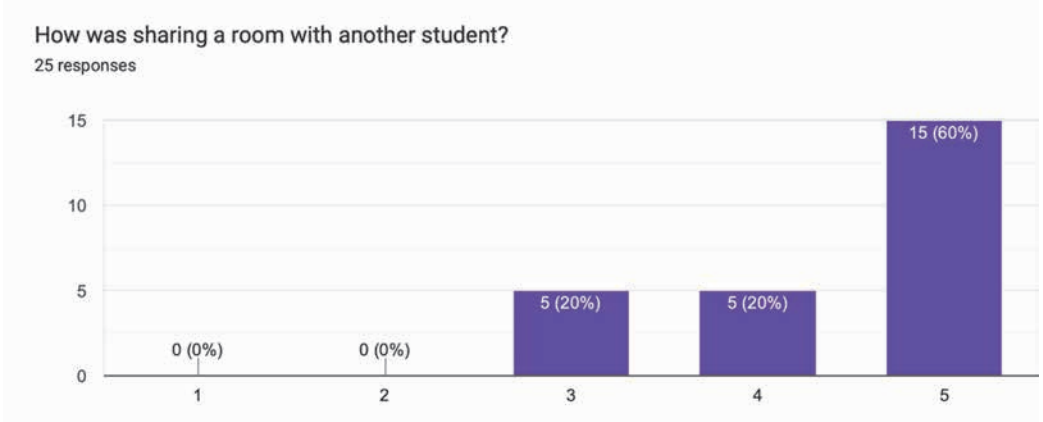
The food she made was delicious, and she took care of me when I caught a cold.

They cooked with vegetables from their house every day and the food was very tasty. I also learned a lot from her stories about various trips and the history of England. She also corrected my strange English pronunciation.

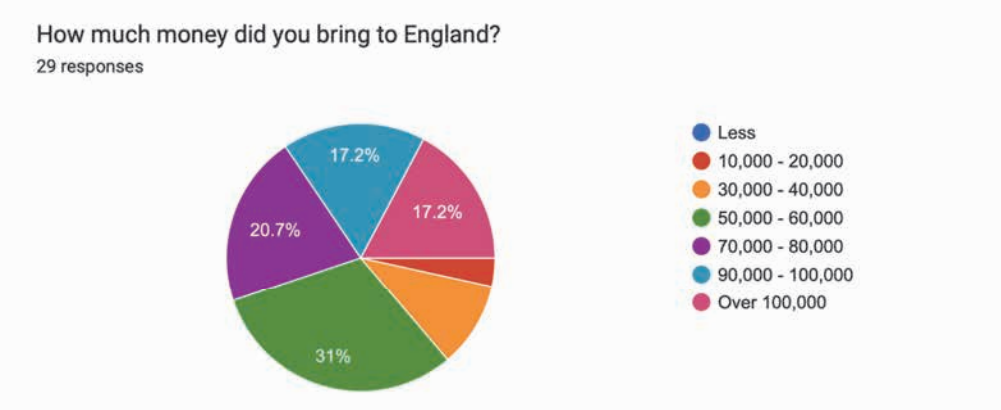
Because they were very kind to me, it felt like another real family.

My host family is very kind, so every morning and night we talked a lot. It was a very fun time.

It is worth highlighting the cultural differences regarding host families. Whereas many Europeans view a homestay as a place they can eat and sleep, many Japanese view the homestay as a chance to experience the 'UK way of life'. I have mentioned this to the SSE Managing Director, Paul Gallina, in the hope that he can place our students with more 'hands-on' host families.



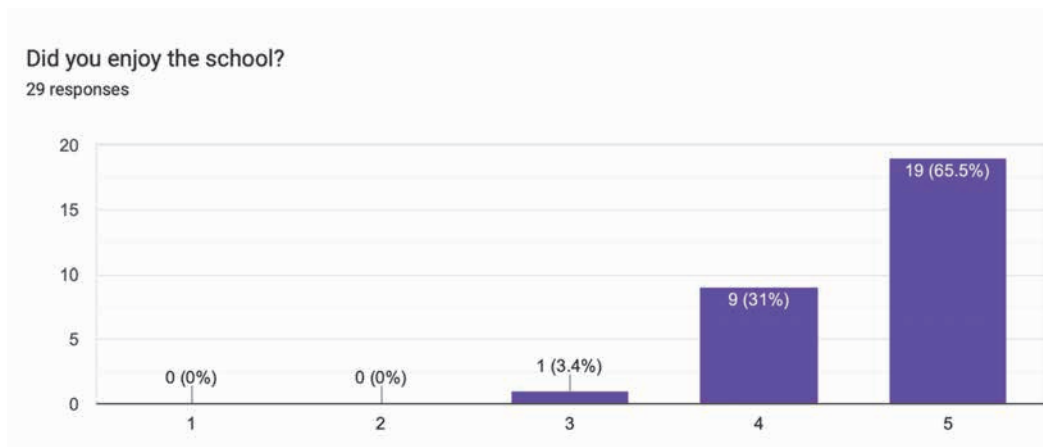
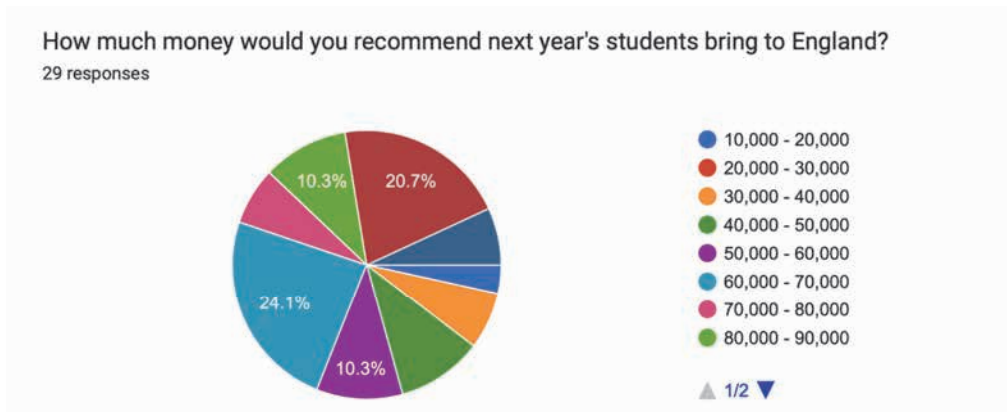
As previously mentioned, as a school we were wondering how our students would react to being placed with the same homestay. It was the most notable change from the previous trip in 2018. However, based on the feedback received, sharing a room with a fellow student was generally considered positively. Being paired together meant that they had someone to talk to on the way to and from school and had the chance to help each other daily. Some of the pairs obviously got along better than others, but it is difficult for us to recommend pairs to SSE as allergies and dietary requirements are an important factor for SSE when placing students into homestays.



In July, at the final seminar before the trip, many parents asked how much money their child would need for this programme. However, it should never be the responsibility of the school to tell the parents how much money their child should bring as everyone's financial situation is different, thus it wouldn't be fair.

Based on the questionnaire responses, the average amount each student took on this year's program was between ¥62,000 – ¥72,000. This was close to the amount the students recommended next years participants bring (see figure below). We will share this information with the parents as a reference to how much money their child should take on next year's trip.

At the time of the 2023 UK trip (with an exchange rate of £1= ¥181) that would equate to roughly £360 – £415.



Throughout the trip, the atmosphere at SSE was always fun. The varied activities and lessons meant there was always something new for our students to experience. Many students enjoyed the content of their lessons (debating / discussions / board games), though the most common response was having the opportunity to speak English with other foreign students. Playing table tennis during lunch was also a natural way for our

students to feel at ease and speak freely. As previously mentioned, the only minor negative point was there were some classes with mostly Japanese students so we will be discussing this with Paul Gallina (Managing Director) and Alison (the Assistant Director of Studies) to see if there is a way to create a better mix of students.

My teacher gave me a lot of things such as pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar and kindly taught me so I became (to) like English! In addition, I could meet many international students. It's very happy and important for my future.

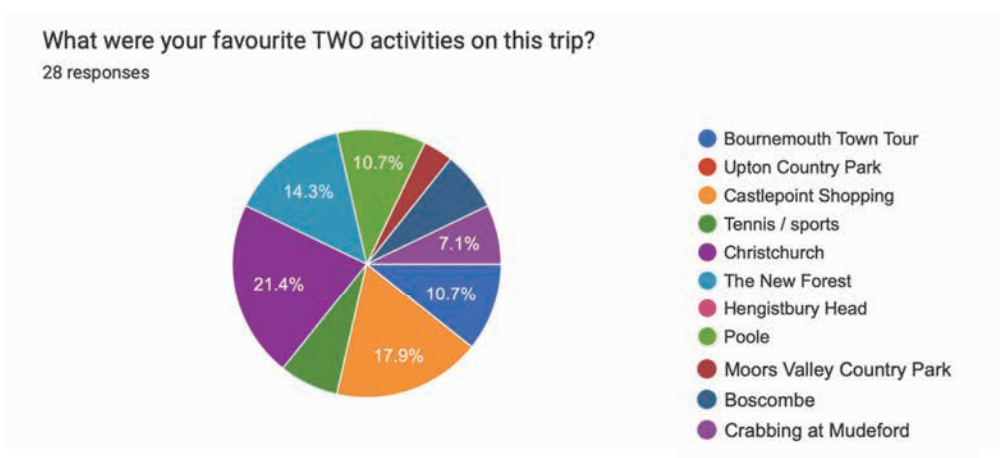
There were students from many different countries attending the language school, so I was able to make friends from all over the world.

My classmate was sooo nice and the teacher was kind. When I was in trouble, my pair always helped and taught me.

The teachers at the school were very good, but there were many Japanese students and I had many opportunities to speak a lot of Japanese.

My teacher gave me a lot of things such as pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar and kindly taught me so I became like English! In addition, I could meet many international students. It's very happy and important for the future.

There were students from many different countries attending the language school, so I was able to make friends from all over the world.



The data regarding the most popular two activities shows there is something for everyone on this trip. Although Christchurch was the most popular, the fact that each activity received some votes means the activities were both varied and fun. The activities also provide the students with a chance to speak to the other international students outside of the classroom in a more natural setting. Experiences like crabbing at Mudeford or relaxing in the grounds of Upton Country Park are part of the charm of this trip.

Aside from the daily activities, we also had two full-day excursions on both Saturdays in Oxford and London. Both of the excursions went fairly smoothly, although there were a couple of issues we had to deal with. In Oxford, Christchurch, the most popular tourist attraction for students who love the Harry Potter films, was fully booked. A few students were disappointed, though we were able to visit a couple of other Harry Potter film locations. I have already made a reservation for next year's trip as it is always fully booked months in advance.

On the London trip, we needed to stop the bus for one of our students due to travel sickness, resulting in us ordering a taxi for them back to their homestay. This was slightly problematic as our tour guide, Yuko Kitayama, had to take our student back. This left Ms. Miura and I to take care of the remaining 34-students. We didn't have too much time in London, but Ms. Miura planned a route that meant we could visit and enjoy many of the major tourist spots. We even had enough time to shop at the famous Fortnum & Mason department store.

What advice would you give to students taking the trip next year?

The answers to this question will help the International Committee when preparing next year's programme. The most popular answer focused on talking to the international students without fear, though this is a lot easier said than done. There was one particular quote that went into great detail:

When you go to the school, you may want to be with Japanese students. I think that is fine at first because you are probably not used to living in the U.K. However, you should start to talk with the other students. I recommend you that you are try in the students lounge or the cafe area. This is because you can come up with topics with ease there. I talked many students while playing table tennis. Also, if there are students from foreign countries at your homestay, it is good for you to invite (them) to hang out. For example, you (can) spend (a) relaxing time in Costa Coffee with the students.

Overall most of the comments were positive and it seems like the trip was enjoyed by all:

You should talk to a lot people. Please enjoy!

You should make lots of friends without fear.

Talking a lot in English is best to improve your English skill.

It's important to try anything without fear of failure.

You should speak to everyone!! Don't be shy!!

Use English. have fun.

Enjoy everything!

Just enjoy it!

Don't be afraid of mistake and communicating various people.

You will definitely make happy memories!

To assist the planning of next year's programme it would be useful to create a timeline to help things run as smoothly as possible.

Trip Planning – Timeline

Action	Date	Responsibility
Request a quote from tour companies	Jan / Feb	Chufu School Office
Decide which tour operator to use	March	International Committee & Chufu School Office
Ask SSE for an itinerary	March / early April	Tour Operator
Bournemouth Seminar ① (<i>* reserve the auditorium due to large numbers</i>) Prepare the application forms (英国短期語学研修応募書類)	Last Saturday in April	International Committee & Tour Operator
Selection process: Conduct interviews	Early May	International Committee
Announce the successful candidates <i>* Advise any student without a current valid passport to apply for one</i>	Early May	
Collect passport information & waivers	Early May	Tour Operator
Collect passport information for teachers attending	Early May	Chufu
Complete SSE Enrolment forms (<i>Excel spreadsheet</i>) <i>* Complete ASAP as they contain the information on allergies, which will help SSE to assist us with any dietary needs.</i>	Early May	Tour Operator
Student Group Presentations – Introduction (Prepare groups beforehand) Each group will study one of the following topics: <i>Food, Entertainment, Sports, History, Bournemouth, London & Oxford</i>	End of May	International Committee
Student Group Presentations – Each group needs to report to their teacher during a fixed three-week period.	Start~Mid-June	International Committee
Bournemouth seminar ② <i>With tour operator, students, and their parents.</i>	Early June	Chufu & Tour Operator
Criminal background check (犯罪 経歴 証明書)	Mid-June	Chufu
Student Group Presentations <i>* A good time to administer the placement tests for SSE.</i>	End of June (LL Room)	Chufu
Create a website/blog for the trip	End of June	International Committee
Bournemouth Seminar ③ <i>With tour operator, students, and their parents. Share host family information</i>	Early July	International Committee & Tour Operator
Decide who is eligible for grants from the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (国際文化交流促進費補助金)	July	Chufu School Office
Administer the 'Student Feedback Questionnaire'	End of Trip	International Committee
Culture Festival Preparation	Early September	International Committee

Student Diaries

The diaries are a fixture of the Bournemouth program. The reason for implementing the diaries is two-fold. Firstly, it gives our students direct access to us, their teachers, and gives them the chance to speak to us if they have any issues or concerns during the programme. The diaries are also an excellent way of documenting their journey and act as a permanent reminder of their time in the UK.

On previous trips to our former school, Richard Language School (RLC), most of the day was spent reading the diaries, correcting them, and giving individual feedback and comments. However, as SSE separates our students based on age into the junior and adult courses, it places a lot more demands on the teachers running the programme as we are always required to be in different places. Thus, due to time constraints, we only had time to read the diaries, offering comments when necessary. This serves us better as it means we are more available to offer our support and can speak directly to any student who has written anything that we feel needs a follow-up discussion.

Key issues before the next trip

By far the most difficult aspect of this trip was the steady stream of ill students – 11 different students in 11 days. This spread our resources thin. In the event of a student becoming ill, legally speaking, if a student is 16 or over then they are allowed to be left alone in a house in the UK. This means that technically the host families are not expected – or obliged – to take care of any ill student under their care.

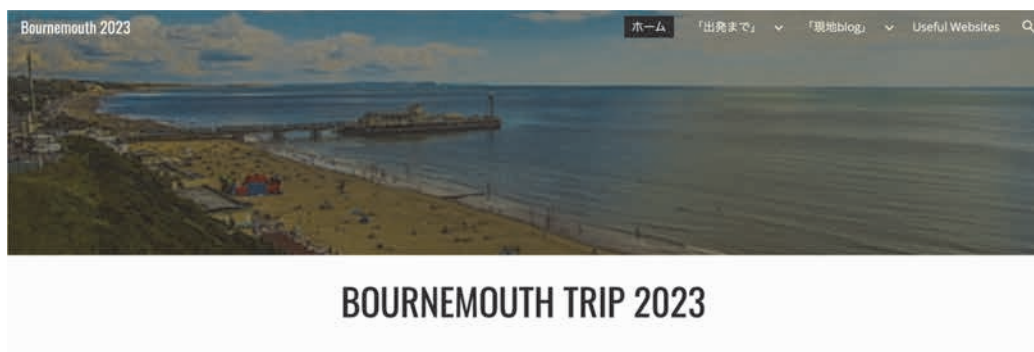
SSE do have an employee who can check on any student absent because of illness, but we personally felt that our students would appreciate seeing a familiar face. It also meant that we were able to give their parents an honest assessment of how their child was doing and helped us to keep on top of the situation. However, with only two teachers and one tour guide, it did stretch our resources thin as one of us had to deliver lunch. This meant that the two of us remaining were responsible for taking care of the rest of the group, who were already split between the junior and senior programmes. In many ways, we were lucky that it was only ever one student who was ill at any point during the trip.

The consensus in the UK was that if you have a fever you should take a paracetamol and would probably be fine within 24-hours. As an English person myself, I would often take a

paracetamol if I felt ill. It is an over-the-counter medicine, which means you can purchase it in many supermarkets and convenience stores. However, it is slightly stronger than the medicine you can buy in Japan, and by law, host families (under the duty of care law) are not permitted to administer any medicine to their students under any circumstances. We believe that we need to mention this during the final seminar for next year's trip and ask the parents to sign a letter giving us permission to give their child some paracetamol if their child falls ill during the trip.

In terms of numbers, 35 students is the maximum we can take to the UK. There were times during this programme that it felt like this may have been too many students. From finding host families to the number of our students in the same classroom (reducing the number of international of students in a class), there are enough reasons that warrant a discussion on how many we take next year. A short discussion in February 2024 with Mr. Noguchi, the head co-ordinator from the tour agency, JTB, mentioned that precuring that many tickets for next year's trip may be slightly difficult. If that is the case, then it may mean we have to take fewer participants on next year's programme, which might make it more manageable in the event of any students falling ill.

Website / Blog:



【英国短期語学研修 サイトへようこそ！】

みなさん、こんにちは。

このサイトでは、プログラム実施期間中の様子などをアップする予定です。

また、必要に応じて出発前情報なども掲載する可能性がありますので、

定期的なチェックをお願いいたします！

The website / blog is a great way to document the trip and share the events of each day with any family or friends who have access to the link (due to security reasons this is not made public). Before we created the website, we issued a consent form to ensure the parents were happy with us uploading pictures of their children.

However, there is some pressure with the blog, mainly in making sure that we have a balanced number of photos of each student. It can also be quite difficult to find time (especially in the event of an illness) to update the website at the end of each day. The QR code will take you to last year's blog. Please feel free to take a look as it will give you insight into the daily routine of our students during the Bournemouth programme.



Final Thoughts

There are a few things to discuss before next year's trip, mainly regarding the number of participants. As this was the first trip we could offer since the coronavirus pandemic, we wanted to make it available to as many students as possible. However, due to the various illnesses, our resources were spread thin. Taking less students would certainly make the trip more manageable and would be easier for SSE to place our students in host families. It would also reduce the number of Japanese students at SSE, which would hopefully create more internationally mixed classes.

Rising fuel surcharge costs, the weak Japanese yen, and the Olympics being held in Paris this summer are all factors to consider as we try to keep the cost of this programme as low as possible. One potential solution could be to fly indirect instead of direct. This could significantly reduce the cost of the programme, though it would also increase the amount of time required for travelling.

A parent consent form allowing us to administer their child paracetamol would be the ideal solution to dealing with any student who falls ill, though even students bringing their own medicine would be a welcome compromise.

Special Thanks

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the head of the International Committee at Chufu, Mamiko Miura, and our JTB tour guide, Yuko Kitayama, who assisted us on

this last trip. Their enthusiasm, energy, and willingness to go above and beyond to assist our students ensured the trip was a rewarding experience for all involved. I would also like to thank all the staff at SSE – especially the Managing Director, Paul Gallina, and the Academic Principal, Kathryn Newman. On many occasions they went out of their way to ensure we had an unforgettable trip.



Eating ice cream in Poole



Sightseeing in London



Shopping in Fortnum & Mason



Relaxing in Christchurch



Exploring Oxford



Away from the shopping in Oxford



Playing table tennis



Moors Valley Country Park



Enjoying a nice walk



Enjoying Oxford



Outside the language school



Mudeford



Southbourne Beach



Oxford



Sightseeing in Bournemouth



Christchurch



Sightseeing in Oxford



Outside the British Museum