

# ICELAND EXPEDITION 2019: FEEDBACK REPORT

## The Inspire Experience

Dangoor Infinity was an ambitious expedition programme, with the British Exploring Society (BES), that took place in Iceland and focused on widening the world view of participants; challenging their perceptions and discovering how they can interact with the environment. The aim is to develop the young people's skills, such as self-esteem, leadership, communication and team work skills.

Before embarking on the trip, our students also developed their enterprise skills through raising funds to earn their place on the trip. This encouraged an entrepreneurial mindset and utilised the Aldridge Attributes (Teamwork, Passion, Creativity, Determination, Risk-Taking & Problem Solving.)

The 4-week long expedition took place in August 2019, and consisted of two weeks trekking through Iceland's volcanic landscape, and a two weeks voyaging at sea, aboard *SV Tenacious*. In both phases, the young people are required to think for themselves, work together, be on watch and take responsibility, all the while challenging their perspectives and encouraging growth.



60% of participants increased their confidence in 'Problem-solving' after a BES expedition



74% of participants increased their confidence in 'Making Decisions that Matter' after a BES expedition.

## Why are we doing this?

The Aldridge Foundation focuses on delivering three core programmes for student enrichment: Inspire, Skill and Mobilise. As part of our Inspire programme, we aim to offer Opening Eyes experiences - to broaden world views, raise ambitions and encourage aspirations. Working with our family of schools, all situated in areas of extreme deprivation and disadvantage, we encourage and help to prepare young people to live the rewarding and productive lives that they choose.



All our schools are in areas of the top 10% or 20% of deprivation, according to IMD 2019

The Dangoor Infinity programme is one of the fantastic trips provided by the British Exploring Society (BES), encouraging young people to push the boundaries of their everyday life and experience some life changing scenarios on these expeditions. BES centre their trips on providing challenging but rewarding expedition experiences that can empower and equip young people with the courage, skills, resilience and determination to make the most of their futures. Given their aims and experience, we felt that it would be a natural fit for us to partner with BES. Through this partnership, BES were able to offer us a number of expedition places at a subsidised cost, which the Foundation funded - with students required to fundraise a small portion. For Dangoor Infinity, BES also partnered with the Jubilee Sailing Trust (JST), an experienced charity that specialises in sea voyages with their fleet of ships. They provided the Tall Ship, *SV Tenacious*, for the water section of the trip. JST ships are specially equipped to offer expeditions to people with a variety of abilities.

## Feedback & Assessment

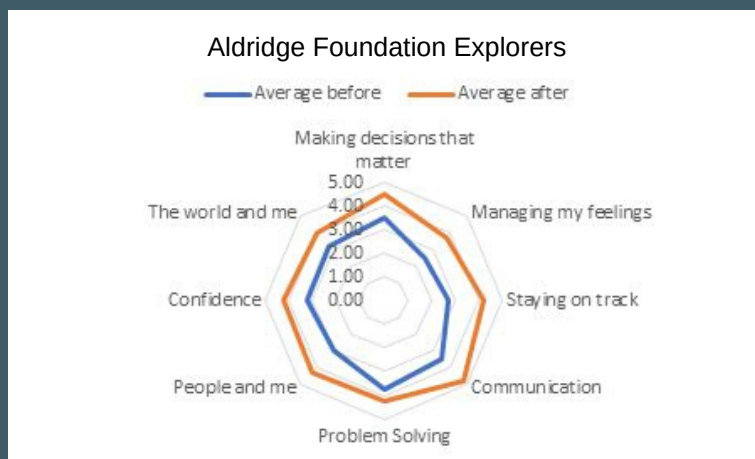
Detailed reports were provided from the Aldridge students that attended, along with BES' 'My Compass' results. These are measurements of a set of skills in a self-assessment format, carried out before and after the expedition. This means that the development of our student's skills can be viewed and assessed, based on what they experienced. Due to our alignment with BES' aims and mission, the *My Compass* criteria is similar to that of the Aldridge Attributes, and they compliment each-other nicely.



The young explorers taking part in Infinity rated their Confidence on average 40% higher after the trip

The skills analysed are:

Making Decisions That Matter, The World and Me, Managing My Feelings, Staying on Track, Communication, Problem Solving, People and Me and Confidence. Overall, Aldridge students improved in all of these skills, making particularly large jumps in Staying on Track, Confidence and Communication.



The graph shows the development of the Aldridge students that participated in the trip. It shows that the average of all the skill points has increased, with some having a significant increase from the expedition experience.

We also received detailed reports from the students, where they fed back on the trip and their learning points, challenges, successes and reflections. Below are some of the quotes from these, particularly in relation to skills developed.

#### What I have learnt?

"That I can do anything if I believe and are confident in myself."

"Mental integrity, more mindfulness of my surroundings, amongst other things."

"I can do a lot more than what I think I can."

#### What was my highlight?

"When we were working as a team during the land-phase and during the sea-phase."

"Making friends that I will keep for life."

"It's difficult to choose but probably the interaction with wildlife both on land and sea."

"The best thing I have ever done in my life that I have no regrets in taking part in."

#### Comments:

"It was challenging physically, mentally and socially. I will look back and be thankful for the friendships made and memories created. It has made me a stronger person and will affect every decision I make in the future."

"A unique expedition combining land exploration with sea adventures to make an unforgettable month. Life changing. An amazing escape into the wilderness bubble away from busy normal life. The chance to explore incredible scenery in a remote location with like-minded people and make friends for life."

"This was an absolute fantastic opportunity for me to experience, a truly once in a lifetime opportunity. I had the privilege of working alongside many like-minded individuals as well as people with disabilities. It meant that we had to work together as a team, to overcome obstacles such as walking through lava fields in rain or guide a visually impaired person up a mountain. I believe that personal development is a huge aspect of the expedition, as not only did it mean that some people had to go out of their comfort zone to achieve things they thought they never could, but it also meant that I had a wider understanding of the world around me and the opportunities that are out there for me. I certainly was able to learn a lot of new skills and acquire knowledge on archaeology, media and marine wildlife during my time."



# Student photos from the Expedition





# EXEPEDITION REPORT: LAUREN TERRY, DACA STUDENT

" Well, where do I begin.

When I first signed up for this trip, I thought it was just another trip to get away from home for a bit, but I was 100% wrong. This was more than just some holiday, it was a start of something new in my life, a new journey that I didn't want to end. From land to sea, every moment, every second was worth it. At the start we were just getting to know each other and have a few laughs, but once we set of on our 9 day Iceland tour, our teamwork and friendship was pushed to the limits.

The first couple of days were tough and we really felt the strain on our body, but in the end we always pulled through and made up for it by having some hot chocolate (if we could find water), or having group naps. Each day we learned new things about each other and where we had come from; it really started to feel like family. By the second week we already knew what to do as soon as we woke up. It was almost like a daily routine. Walking for 36K and seeing the most amazing waterfalls must be my biggest accomplishment and is also a day I will never forget. No matter how hard it would get, we always knew that the rest of our team would have our backs.

When I was on the coach during the 10hour ride to the ship, just the thought of knowing that we still have 2 weeks left and that we were starting something new filled me with so much happiness. Even though I was nervous and extremely intimidated by the ship at first, I am so glad I did it. The sea sickness was a small curve ball, but I got over it and enjoyed my time on the ship. The food was AMAZING, quick shout out to Ian! I remember one night on watch very clearly; we were out at 4AM and we had just harboured outside of Ireland across from a beach which had a fair on. We looked up and the sky was just full of these bright stars, then we turned around and saw the milky way. We sat there for a whole hour just mesmerised by the sky, my neck started to hurt after a while.

Another brilliant memory I had was the dolphins. We hadn't seen wildlife at all since we had been on the ship, then one day we spotted something jumping out of the water. I quickly grabbed my camera and capture the dolphin in the air. We ran to the front on the ship to find at least ten more dolphins including a baby one. They followed us for about two days, and we saw them every morning till the went away. That was the best thing to wake up to, clear skies and jumping dolphins while the wind is blowing gently in your face. I think that is mostly what the expedition was about, making memories you would never forget, and that is exactly what we did. But not only did we make memories for life, but we also made friends for life.

What impact has this expedition had on me?

Well for a start I haven't shut up about it since I got back to England! Ever since I have been home, I have always referred to the trip. At first it felt like being at home was like being on holiday, away from the ship. The thought of not going back and not being around everyone every minute of every day made me sad. My level of confidence has massively increased since I went on this expedition, not only in myself but for what the future may hold. This was a lifetime opportunity, it has changed my outlook on life and made me rethink everything I wanted to do before. Even though I did miss home a couple of times, being in the middle of nowhere with nothing but silence made me feel so free. Nothing to worry about nothing to care about, you were just in the moment and it felt so surreal. I would never change anything about the trip or my decisions to sign up.

If I were to say just one word to someone to describe the trip, it would be "life-changing". And all I want to say to the people who made this expedition possible is thank you. Thank you for changing young people's lives. We live in a world full of technology which pulls young people away from the most beautiful nature and surroundings and expeditions like these just remind people that we need to get out more we need to pull away from our daily snapchats and tweets about irrelevant things."