



INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPATING FAMILIES – 2011

Welcome to the 35th **Staffordshire Limousin Experience**. We hope that you all, participants and families, will have a very enjoyable and rewarding experience. SLE has been arranging exchanges for 34 years and in that time almost 8000 Staffordshire families have taken part. The vast majority of them have been problem-free and for some the Experience will add a new dimension to their lives, which will last for many years.

WHAT IS THE STAFFORDSHIRE LIMOUSIN EXPERIENCE?

The *Staffordshire Limousin Experience* (SLE) is an association of teachers of French in Staffordshire schools who work in a voluntary capacity with their colleagues in the Limousin to arrange home to home exchanges for the young people in our two regions. SLE puts Staffordshire families, who want their children to improve their French and to experience the wider world, in touch with like-minded families in the Limousin.

HOW HAVE WE SELECTED YOUR PARTNER?

Your partner has been selected from among those French children who have applied in the same group as you using age, interests and personality as the main criteria. Although we take a lot of care over the pairings, the number of children to choose from is limited so we cannot guarantee a good match every time. The partner we have offered you is the best match available. If the two children do not appear to be well matched please bear in mind that the form is just a guide and it doesn't mean that they won't have a successful exchange.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO NOW

If you accept the partner we have suggested, then the SLE hands the exchange over to you - it is now YOUR exchange. You are entering into an agreement with the French family to send your child to France into their care and, in return, to welcome their child into your home and your care. Please complete and send the attached form immediately. It is important to make contact as soon as possible and to start to build a relationship by letter or by telephone. As a minimum it is a condition of the exchange that at least two letters are written, one now and one more before the end of February. Also, we recommend that parents write a brief letter in English to the French parents expressing a few kind thoughts and good wishes. An exchange of letters between parents is much appreciated.

WHEN WILL YOU HEAR FROM YOUR PARTNER?

Most partnerships will be in contact within 2 - 3 weeks. However one problem each year is the time it takes for some of the French children to write. Please be patient and keep trying! Use email, or if you feel up to it, try telephoning. The code for the French families is **00 33 followed by the last 9 digits of their number** (e.g. to phone 05 55 12 34 56 from the UK, dial 00 33 5 55 12 34 56)

If you have not had any contact by the end of January, inform your school. **DON'T WAIT ANY LONGER.**

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SLE?

SLE accepts applications, via the schools in both regions, from families wanting to take part in the Exchange. SLE ensures that all applicants are supported by their school but the recommendation which schools give to each applicant is based only on information known within school about the applicant and his/her family.

Once you have accepted a partner SLE remains on hand to help you if you encounter any problems and to see generally that things run smoothly. We will provide information and guidance and we will arrange meetings where we shall give more detailed advice and which will be an opportunity for you to ask questions.

SLE will arrange transport to and from the Limousin and will provide responsible adults (usually serving teachers) to escort the children to their French families and back home again.

FAMILY MEETINGS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

SLE will arrange meetings next term for all participants and their parents and details will be announced in January. The detailed travel arrangements will be issued at those meetings but we can tell you now that children will require:

- **FULL, VALID PASSPORT.** If anyone is not the holder of a passport of an EU Member State you should let us know immediately.
- **EHIC (European Health Insurance Card)** entitling them to medical treatment within the EU - available free of charge by applying online at www.dh.gov.uk, by phone or by post. The **EHIC form is available from the Post Office.**

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE TWO WEEKS IN FRANCE?

On the journey to and from France SLE accepts responsibility for the care of the children. During the time they are staying with their partner the responsibility for their care lies with the French family in the same way as you accept responsibility for the French partner when he/she stays with you. The decision to place your child into the care of the French family is yours.

SLE will leave representatives (usually teachers of French) in the Limousin to provide a local point of contact and to help out should any problems arise. Their role is to do everything possible to support the partnership through any difficulties with advice and intervention, when judged appropriate, in order to make the stay with their chosen family as happy and rewarding as possible. The principle by which both SLE and our French colleagues operate is for the reciprocal commitment, which both families have freely entered into, to be maintained for its duration.

DATES AND PRICE 2011

The provisional dates for Easter are **April 11 – April 22** and **July 24 – August 4** in the summer. These will be confirmed once flights have been booked.

The price has been set at £295 and the full amount will be due on or before **Monday 7th March 2011.**

WHAT YOU PAY FOR

Most of the cost of the Experience goes on transport to and from France, the visit to Alton Towers, the disco, and on the cost of supply teachers for our accompanying staff when they are absent from teaching duties. Other costs are insurance, an allowance for families who host the visiting teachers and a small amount for administration.

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF HOST FAMILIES?

The responsibilities of both English and French host families are set down in the Agreement which each family signs. They are that the host family should take good care of the visiting child and supervise them at all appropriate times. They should ensure that their own child is present during the whole time that their partner is with them and that no other activity takes priority over the hospitality given to the guest. They should not take the visitor away from the family home without the consent of his/her family and they should pay for all outings and excursions. Finally they should make it possible for their guest to keep in touch with his/her family.

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT ALL FAMILIES WILL KEEP TO THESE PRINCIPLES?

SLE lays down a framework within which the Exchange operates. All families are made aware of this and are given advice and guidance on what is expected of them and advice on how to get the best out of the Experience. French and English families receive the same advice. All families sign an undertaking to abide by the principles when they apply to take part and you have a copy of your partner's undertaking. However you must realise that the agreement is based on trust and goodwill but, if misunderstandings do arise, SLE is always ready to respond to parents' queries and offer advice and guidance.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT LEVEL OF HOSPITALITY TO OFFER?

The main aim of the SLE is to provide an opportunity to spend two weeks in an English/French family, to improve language skills and to experience a different culture. Entertainment is a bonus and does not form part of the commitment which SLE asks of participating families. However, since you are dealing with teenagers, it is often helpful to occupy them; so most families will want to organise a certain number of activities. But you should realise that the Staffordshire area and the Limousin are two very different regions and that the possibilities for entertaining teenagers are less obvious in the Limousin.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM

In the first instance you should discuss any problem with the teacher at your child's school who may refer you to the SLE's administrator. If the problem is urgent you may contact the administrator directly. Details are given below.

When your child is in France any problem should be discussed with the accompanying staff in France whose contact numbers will be given to you.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Travel will be by coach and plane.

COACH TRAVEL & SEAT-BELTS

For any coach travel in the UK, SLE will arrange transport in coaches which conform to British law and contract only vehicles fitted with lap-belts.

For coach travel in France, SLE will arrange transport in coaches which, although French law does not require seat-belts to be fitted, will be equipped with the necessary seat-belts.

You may also like to know that French law imposes a maximum speed limit of 90 kph (56 mph) on coaches carrying groups of children.

We hope you will have a very enjoyable and rewarding Experience.

A real commitment from the participants and a positive attitude usually ensure a successful outcome!

www.staffordshire-limousin-experience.org.uk