

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – Holiday Clubs

1 Where do your Holiday Clubs take place?

We currently run in two locations. Our main venue is at Sydenham High School, Senior, 19 Westwood Hill SE26 6BL, where we run every half term, two weeks over Easter and all six weeks over the Summer. Our second venue is at Beecroft Garden Primary, Beecroft Rd, SE4 2BS, where we run over Easter and two weeks over the Summer. (Please check the timetable to see if we are running over half terms at Beecroft.) We are very lucky to have excellent facilities in both schools. At Sydenham High we make use of the fantastic 130-seat theatre and both schools have a large hall with a stage. Both schools have an outdoor area where the children can play outside at lunch.

2 What age groups do you take?

We take children from ages 5-16. We tailor our weeks to the different ages, so we split the children into age appropriate groups. These are ages 5-7, ages 7-9 and ages 10+. If children are on the cusp of a group (e.g aged 7) then we encourage the children to join the more advanced group once they have done a week or two with us already.

3 How many children in each group and what is your adult to child ratio?

The most children we ever take in one group is 20 with 2 teachers assigned to that group.

4 What are the hours?

The main club runs from 9.00 – 3.30. We offer extended hours from 8.30 – 4.30 which are charged at an extra £5 per half an hour to cover the extra hire fees and the caretaker's overtime. At Sydenham High, the school must close at 4.30, however at Beecroft it is possible to extend until 5.00, but please contact a Gems teacher to ask if this is available that week.

5 How do you sign the children in/out? What if someone different is collecting my child?

To safeguard the children correctly and know who has arrived and is now in our care, we ask the parents/guardians to sign the children in when they arrive, and out when they leave. There will be a designated room per group, so please check the email carefully or ask when you arrive. On the sign in sheet, there will be an option to write down a number and name if someone different will be collecting your child that day.

6 What does it cost? Do you accept childcare vouchers and offer sibling discounts?

The price for the 5 day week is £150 and for a 4 day week (if there are bank holidays) the price is £120. This works out to be £30 per day. (Please note in 2018 we had to increase our prices for the first time in seven years as the school increased our rent by 50%. We want our clubs to be inclusive for everyone and if you compare our prices with the other local performing arts groups in the area, you will see that we are the most affordable.) Unfortunately we do not accept childcare vouchers at the moment, but we hope to in the future. We offer a 10% sibling discount on each additional child.

7 How do I book?

Please fill in the booking form via the Holiday Club website and you will then be sent a confirmation email within 2 days confirming your child's place. Places do fill up quickly so we do advise booking early

8 How are the days organised?

The first day is all about settling the children in. We begin the morning playing lots of fun games and ice-breakers to introduce the children to each other and the teachers. We then begin introducing the theme for that week, exploring the different characters and storylines. We then do a read-through of the script and slowly begin rehearsing the show. We begin every morning with a warm up to wake us up and prepare us for the day ahead. This could involve games, a stretch or a physical dance warm up. We also do a singing warm up and some fun articulation games to help with the children's speech. Each day, we take a break around 10.30am for a snack, followed by lunch approximately 12.00-1.00. Weather permitting, after we have eaten our lunch, we take the children outside for fresh air and a run around! We then take an afternoon break around 2.30 and then break for games to finish the day and a de-brief around 3.00 before pick up at 3.30. The rest of the day is spent working towards our performance; rehearsing the lines, learning the songs or making arts and crafts for costumes or posters. Our aim is for the children to have fun, so our days are relaxed and creative and we break up the rehearsals so there is not too much pressure put on the children. Children stay in their groups all day, however at lunch time we may merge the groups depending on what time they take their breaks.

9 What if my child does not know anyone or is feeling apprehensive on the first day?

Many children come to Gems not knowing anyone, so we do our very best to make them feel at ease as soon as they arrive. This may involve buddying them up with another child or one of our teachers may stay with them until they feel settled. For the younger ones, we begin our games straight away, so that they can dive straight into the fun and any nerves will soon be forgotten. Parents are welcome to stay for the beginning if they are feeling anxious, but we do find that the children settle in quicker once they get fully involved in the games or arts and crafts. We would be happy to give you an update in the afternoon if you are feeling especially anxious.

10 Do you provide lunch?

We do not provide lunch and we expect children to come with a packed lunch, snacks and water. We have a 'no-sharing' policy and ask that you do not bring anything with nuts. We are happy to re-fill water bottles or heat any food up.

11 Who are your teachers?

Many of our Holiday Club teachers work for us during the week running after school clubs or at our Saturday Theatre School. They all have several years experience teaching children of all ages and many have a performance background, having trained at a Drama school or University. We are very lucky to have some amazing teachers, many who have performed in West End shows or appeared on the TV and work as performing arts teachers or teaching assistants in schools. We are all passionate about sharing the positive impact that the performing arts can have on children. All teachers have a current, clear DBS, first aid and safeguarding training. There will be a Gems Manager assigned for the week, should you have any questions, complaints or compliments.

12 What is your cancellation policy?

We appreciate that due to unforeseen circumstances, you may need to cancel your child's place. If we can fill your child's place directly with another child, who may have been on the waiting list and we have at least 5 days notice, then we will offer a full refund. If we are not able to fill the place in time and have not been given 5 days notice, then unfortunately a refund will not be feasible. (This policy is subject to the Manager's discretion so please email us and we will do our best to accommodate you.)

13 What time are the shows on the Friday and can we bring family/friends?

We will confirm the show times but generally the younger groups perform around 2.30 and the older ones 3.00 and 3.30. All shows should be finished around 4.00

14 Do you provide costumes?

We do not provide costumes for the children and we ask you to find something during the week. We do not expect you to buy anything expensive, but instead we will give you some basic ideas then it is up to you to get creative at home! We always have an arts and crafts afternoon where the children can make masks or props to add to their costumes. Please bring your costume in a named bag so it does not get lost.

15 What happens to Lost Property?

All lost property is kept in the lost property box in/near the main hall. We will collect all items at the end of the week and leave them in the box. After several weeks, if the items have not been collected then we will take them to a charity shop. Please call us if you believe your child has left something and we will arrange a time for you to collect it.

16 What happens if my child is ill? How do you deal with first aid?

Please inform a teacher if your child has a specific allergy or is not feeling too well that day. If children feel ill, then we will carry out basic checks and if we are concerned, then we will contact the parent. We have several fully stocked first aid kits and staff are trained with basic first aid care. We will always assess the situation and keep parents in the loop. If your child is not well that day, please call us, as it may be best to keep them at home if their illness is infectious.

17 Do you take photographs or videos of the children?

We do take several photographs throughout the week on the Gems phone and some of these will be used on our website, social media or local newspaper. On the booking form, please inform us if you would rather we did NOT take any photographs or videos of your child. Sometimes we take a group picture which we use just for their certificates - please let us know if you would be happy for us to do just this. When sharing the images, we do not include the children's names and try to avoid faces where possible. We ask that parents are sensitive when sharing images of their children online as they may feature other children.

Any further questions, please email emma@gemsperformingarts.com or call 07946 176 452 and we look forward to welcoming your child.