

# Alton Castle Retreat

On **Monday 19th September 2016** Year 6 headed off for a three day retreat at Alton Castle, Staffordshire.

As well as the excitement of a short break with their classmates, they also took part in a number of different activities, including mountain biking, trekking, archery and survival.

With the theme of the retreat being Discipleship, each activity included reflection, discussion and prayer. Everyone was challenged and encouraged to find hidden strength, learn new skills, and show perseverance in their individual and team challenges.

Their first activity, on Monday evening, was Night Line. Here the children were impressive as they demonstrated their teamwork and trust in each other, as they made their way down through the trees whilst being blindfolded. It was remarkable to see each of the children supporting those around them. During Tuesday and Wednesday the children were split into four groups for their activities. Those who took part in the cycling activity showed their skills weaving in and out of the puddles along the bridle path, as well as perseverance to cycle to the top of the hill, without stopping, back to the castle. Another physical challenge was the trek to Ina's Rock. Using their orienteering skills, the children found their way across farmland, the stream and through the trees before finding their way home. A real highlight was the catwalk competition to make their way across the bridge. Those that took part in the archery were also treated to a stroll through the beautiful countryside before learning how to hold and aim their bow to fire. Finally, during survival, the children thought about what was needed to survive, building themselves a shelter and looking for a water source. They all agreed that the highlight of the survival activity was enjoying the toasted marshmallows and hot chocolate.

The activities were all delivered by a team of young people (aged from 18 years to 22 years old) who are predominantly waiting to go on to University, staying for one year, living and working as part of the Alton Castle Community. This team brought the Castle and the programme to life. They acted as wonderful, enthusiastic role models for the children on retreat, both from a spiritual point of view and through the energy and enthusiasm they have for life.

The retreat offered Year 6 an opportunity to bond and reflect upon their life and faith journey so far. It was also an occasion for the children to look ahead to their final year together at Primary School, which will conclude in July 2017 when they will receive the special Sacrament of Confirmation.

