

Year 7 Met Office Sleepover

"A trip of a lifetime"

Friday evening

Firstly when we arrived, we all went to one of the conference rooms to choose our tents for the night and make up our beds. We then had a dinner of pizza, salad and chips!

After a safety briefing, our Met Office Buddies accompanied us during an evening full of activities each of which lasted for about 30 minutes...

We first learned about wind, air pressure and how to read the wind while the weather forecast is on. We then went on to learn how thermal imaging cameras worked and the importance of temperature data to farmers. Next we moved up to 'Clouds', where we saw three different types of cloud and identified what type of weather it would be or to expect before ending on a cloud quiz and having the opportunity to make our own cloud in a bottle!

After a break, we were entertained by our Buddies' short play on the history of weather forecasting before we headed to another part of the Met Office. With the guidance of a grid drawn in chalk on the floor, we learned how they use different mathematical formulae to predict the weather in several points in the UK, When forecasting, the atmosphere is divided into a grid which we modeled using sticks of bamboo, spaghetti and polystyrene balls!

After our bedtime story on climate change, we went to bed at 11 o' clock.

Saturday morning

After breakfast, we gathered our things and started the last day of activities. Our first activity was a Q and A session with people from several different Met Office stations across the UK. They told us all about what exactly they did and we then voted on what job sounded the most interesting out of all of them. The lady who gives weather forecasts to RAF pilots won our vote!

Then, two of the most interesting activities of the day were tours of the Operations Room, which has forecasters working all day and night, and throughout the year, and then the huge, complicated supercomputer; this supercomputer powers the whole building's computers and processes all the calculations needed to predict the weather.

The fourth activity involved us looking at radars used to discover the precise location of rain and lightning. We learned that they can roughly estimate where the lightning is by measuring the interval between the lightning flash and the start of the thunder. If you count the time in seconds and then divide by three, you will have the approximate distance in kilometers.

Next we actually learned how they Met Office and the BBC broadcasting center in London produced a weather forecast. We looked at the type of language in which they used when producing this and the stages in which they gave out the weather forecast. We were told that we would be using this information shortly to produce our own weather forecast.

As we were told, our final activity of the day was to actually produce our own weather forecast, in one of the Met Offices official recording studios. As we entered, we were given a brief introduction on how the green screen worked, and the order in which the slides would come on in. We were allowed to either work in small groups or individually. This was defiantly one of the best activities of the whole day!

Before we were allowed to leave the premises, we were told to meet up in the conference room near our sleeping area. Here, we were taken pictures of, first as an individual school, secondly as the whole of the group invited. After this, a brief speech was given by the person who had organized this science camp, and we were given a goody-bag to take home with several leaflets with most of the information that we had learned on it. We all packed all of our bags etc...; we then left the building and traveled back to the school on the mini-bus. The whole trip was brilliant and it was, truly, a once in a lifetime opportunity.

By Gemma McBain and Ella Sheffield