



Child sponsorship protocol

How we will communicate with the children

1. Routine and as-needed care of the sponsored children is in the hands of the Trust's Darjeeling-based Trustees. They maintain relationships with the sponsored children and their families on an as-needed basis throughout the year, and resolve any problems as they arise, with consultation of UK-based Trustees by phone or email where necessary.
2. Darjeeling-based Trustees carry out regular tasks throughout the year, including the purchase of uniforms, shoes, equipment and umbrellas for the children. They hold a meeting once a year, attended by all sponsored children and their families and usually before the start of the school year in March, to review exam performance and identify any support needed for extra-curricular activities. This regular contact builds a relationship of reassurance and trust between the children and their families, and the Trust as an organisation.
3. In addition to this ongoing care, when UK-based Trustees visit Darjeeling they will, alongside one or more Darjeeling-based Trustees, meet all the sponsored children face to face (unless in individual cases this is not possible) to assess progress and needs.
4. In seasons where no Trustees visit from the UK, Darjeeling-based Trustees will meet all sponsored children individually and face to face, with the same objectives.
5. Whoever carries them out, the objectives of these individual face to face meetings are:
 - To gain a general understanding of about the child's progress, health and wellbeing and identify any additional support they may benefit from which the Trust can arrange.
 - To identify, and support the child in making, any specific decisions their age or situation might warrant, including but not limited to decisions about education choices. This may take the form of signposting the child and/or their family to additional local support, or understanding the need to allocate funding to allow that support to be accessed.
 - To collect in written form information for sponsors about the child's progress. For some children, especially younger ones, this may simply consist of a general assurance that the child is well.
 - To build a relationship of trust between each child and Darjeeling Children's Trust as an organisation, to reassure the child and their family of the long-term support the Trust has committed to provide.
6. Children will not be asked further unnecessary questions which do not serve the objectives set out above.
7. Wherever possible, conversations will also take place with the teachers and family members of the children, to support the objectives set out above.
8. Photographs of children will be taken by Darjeeling-based Trustees or their assistants a minimum of twice a year, and sent by email to the UK for onward dissemination to sponsors.

9. Any communication between sponsors and children must be channelled through the Trust rather than made directly. The Trust will not facilitate gifts to be sent to individual children by sponsors, as this can create feelings of inequality amongst the children and their families.

How we will communicate with our sponsors

10. Twice a year, sponsors who wish to receive it will be sent a child sponsorship communication from the Trust. This will include a recent photograph of their sponsored child, any meaningful information about their progress and a general update about the sponsorship programme and the schools we work with. In some cases, particularly of younger children, information on an individual child may simply consist of an assurance that they are doing fine and making the expected progress.
11. Sponsors may choose not to receive information about an individual child; if this is the case, they will receive a general update about the sponsorship programme and the schools we work with instead. Sponsors may opt out of individual communications at any time by emailing sponsorship@darjeelingchildrenstrust.org.uk.
12. On occasion, and if relevant, the Trust may send meaningful information about their child to sponsors more frequently. This may happen, for example, if there is a significant change in the child's circumstances.
13. On rare occasions a child may drop out of the sponsorship programme. When this is the case the Trust will inform the relevant sponsor and offer them the opportunity to transfer their support to a different child.
14. If a sponsor feels they can no longer maintain their support for a child, they should contact the Trust to let them know. The Trust commits to maintain support for children in these circumstances until a replacement sponsor can be found, so that their education is not affected.

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