



# **Vancouver Island School of Innovation and Inquiry**

**Family Handbook  
2023-2024**



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## About

Welcome to the start of a new school year at the Vancouver Island School of Innovation and Inquiry (VISII -- pronounced vee-sigh). This year is our fourth year of operation and our third year as an independent school!

We acknowledge that our school rests in the heart of Straits Salish territory, a living culture with its own rites, ceremonies, and unfolding history. We honour the Esquimalt, Songhees, and WSÁNEĆ peoples, whose homelands we share and whom we recognize as our neighbours.

## Our Mission as a School

To ignite a passion for learning by creating an open inquiry space, connecting inquirers with knowledge, and building a framework where questions matter.

As parents and educators, we believe that:

- Children are naturally inquisitive.
- Learners cross disciplines naturally in pursuit of the questions that matter to them.
- The best learning is learner-centered.
- Inquiry builds resilience, fosters imagination and creativity, and inspires curiosity.

## Vision for VISII

An environment where learning engages all dimensions of a child's life.



### Vancouver Island School of Innovation and Inquiry 2023-2024 School Calendar

September 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
18.5 days in session						

October 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				
20 days in session						

November 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		
20 days in session						

December 2023						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	10.5 days in session					

January 2024						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			
17 days in session						

February 2024						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
26	26	27	28	29		
19 days in session						

March 2024						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	10.5 days in session					

April 2024						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				
20 days in session						

May 2024						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
21 days in session						

June 2024						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					
12.5 days in session						

Oct 2 National Day of Truth and Reconciliation  
 Oct 9 Thanksgiving  
 Nov 13 Remembrance Day  
 Feb 19 Family Day  
 March 29 Good Friday  
 April 1 Easter Monday  
 May 20 Victoria Day

175 days in session  
 = 1050 hours  
 Instructional  
 hours=875

Required hours =  
 850

Please note that the final pro-D day is to be determined and families will receive a minimum of 30 days notice



## Staff List

Staff contact information is in the password-protected “Parent” area of the VISII website.

### **Simone Littledale** (Principal and Lead teacher)

We are delighted that Simone will be continuing with VISII and expanding her role to be the principal for the 2023-2024 school year. She has connected with the students so well and has brought such a diversity and depth of knowledge and enthusiasm to the school. Whatever topic the children bring up she is quick to embrace it and either surprise us with her breadth of knowledge or dive into research with the learner. Many of the learners are becoming passionate about birds and Spanish just from the enthusiasm that she brings to these subjects.

Simone (she/her) is an interdisciplinary artist and educator with a passion for inquiry-based education. Her varied work history includes working as a copywriter for nonprofits, a production potter, and an educational falconer. A native speaker of Spanish, she has also worked as a community arts facilitator with Amazonian Indigenous communities through Fundación Calanoa. Simone holds a B.A. in Creative Writing and Spanish, and has published poetry in both languages. She also holds an Education diploma with a focus on art and Spanish from the University of Victoria. A grateful guest on Ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ territory for over fifteen years, Simone is also an avid citizen scientist, weaver, forager, indoor gardener, and dispenser of unsolicited bird facts..

### **Meghan Carrico** (Vice Principal and Inclusive Education Coordinator)

With her 34 years of experience in innovative education, Meghan has been an excellent guide to the Board as we navigate the early years of establishing a school and we are grateful for all the knowledge and assistance. Meghan is a principal, education consultant, distributed learning teacher, partner, mother, and recently a grandmother. Her passion for innovative education has led her to help people start a variety of educational initiatives, from schools to outdoor programs. She is passionate about helping families build community and discover new and bold paths that support their child's learning. Meghan holds a B.A. from Antioch college, a teaching certificate from Simon Fraser University, and a M.A. in Leadership from Royal Roads University. Meghan has a love of textile arts, costume design, theatre, baby goats and mathematical thinking. Channeling her strong belief in community-based education, she founded the TES music theatre program out of the Revue theatre on Granville Island.

### **Sasha Ilnyckyj** (Teacher)

Sasha (he/him) is an educator currently working in Ləkʷəŋən territory in Victoria, Canada. As a public school teacher and private music teacher, Sasha possesses a fascination with learning and the learner. His educational philosophy continues to evolve and gravitate around fostering community, empowering youth, creating generative learning and forming links between the class and the broader world. Sasha's current pet projects include collaborative music-making, hydroponic gardening, indigenizing learning and using inquiry in the classroom. Sasha's education has often taken him to the intersections that lie at the junction between the shrewd sciences and the expressive arts. He holds a B.A. in history & psychology (McGill University), a diploma in classical music (Capilano University), and a B.Ed. with specializations in science and



history (University of Victoria). This eclectic learning path was charted with the hope that breadth will enable him to design interdisciplinary explorations that engage and empower his students.

#### Madison Chessa (Education Assistant)

Madison is a dynamic and curious person. She currently identifies as a parent of twins who practices community care in various roles. Working as a crisis response worker, doula, and education assistant enables Madison to connect meaningfully with her community and develop personalized support systems. Madison prefers to be outdoors; learning with the land, sharing her excitement and travelling with gratitude. She believes in empowering youth. She is passionate about team building and learning through play. While living and learning as a guest on the traditional territory of the Ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples, Madison recognizes the importance of innovative learning and decolonizing practices. She knows a little about a lot, trail runs, beads flowers, plays games and continually seeks new learning opportunities.

#### Pisco (School Mascot)

Though not on the payroll of the school, Pisco is an important member of the VISII community. Pisco is Ms. Littledale's parrotlet; he comes to the school when he is in the mood and provides avian mentorship and inspiration.

## Parent Involvement

VISII strives to be a parent participatory school. Parents are asked to let Ms. Littledale know of their areas of expertise, which she uses to develop a table of all your various reported expertise and will work to align students with parents experts and community experts as the learners' inquiries start to take shape. We hope you will help any learners whose questions align with your interests/expertise, as your time permits.

### Parent Auxiliary Council

VISII has not established a PAC at this time.

## Contacting the school

Many general inquiries can be resolved by emailing [admin@visii.ca](mailto:admin@visii.ca). In case of an emergency, you can phone the school mobile phone at 250-883-1667.

## School Hours

The school day runs from 9:30-3:30 Monday through Friday.

- Before school care (9:15-9:30)
  - As we share the space with other tenants of the Cridge Centre for the Family, students are expected to meet the teacher in the school unless otherwise specified.
- After school (after 3:30)



- Students not involved in VISII-organised activities (such as clubs) are expected to leave the school grounds.

## Schedule

The following is the typical daily schedule:

9:30-10:00 Current events  
10:00-11:30 /Seminar and/or Inquiry  
11:30 - 12:00 Lunch  
12:00-12:30 Recess  
12:30-1:00 Inquiry or outdoor time  
1-2 Seminar or Inquiry  
2-3:30 Inquiry

## Earthspring

We are happy to offer a biweekly outdoor program at Earthspring Sanctuary, at 405 Hazlitt Creek Rd. On these days, students spend the entire day out on the land, learning about topics such as ecology, outdoor safety, indigenous land use, and leave no trace principles. Earthspring trips happen rain or shine, so it is crucial that students come prepared for the weather. Carpool is available for students to get to and from Earthspring, and can be arranged through contacting [slittledale@visii.ca](mailto:slittledale@visii.ca). By bringing your learner to Earthspring you agree to the potential risks associated with outdoor activities.

In the event of snowfall or severe winds, Earthspring will be cancelled.

## Getting to and from school

### Drop off and Pick up

Although our drop-off and pick-up times are slightly different from the other day-care, after-school, and preschool programs at the Cridge, the Cridge parking lot and driveways are busy places in the mornings and afternoons. Please be vigilant, drive slowly, and watch for children crossing the driveway from the Cridge building or from parked cars to the field in front of the building. Please be aware that the road in front of our building is a fire lane and **cannot** be used to drop off or pick up. Because it is a fire and ambulance lane, cars are not even allowed to stop. You need to come into the parking lot at the side of the building. Parking on the Cridge grounds is meant to be short-term parking (15 mins for pick-up and drop-off purposes only). Now that we have more families joining us this year, we would like to encourage families to use parking spaces available on King Street or Higgins Street and walk to VISII or arrange a meeting place away from the building to reduce congestion on the Cridge grounds. To reduce crowding, please do not come into the school to collect your child.





## Buses

VISII can be reached by the number 4 or 6 bus routes. The number 4 stops on Hillside Avenue at the driveway leading into the Cridge Centre for the Family. The number 6 runs along Quadra Street with stops at Hillside and Quadra; from there, learners can walk the two blocks east along Hillside to the school.

## Bikes

Students are welcome to bike to school but we do not have a secure bike rack. At this time, students are bringing their bikes down to the lower level and parking their bikes just outside the doors to the school

## Attendance

If your child is going to be away from school, please send an email to [attendance@visii.ca](mailto:attendance@visii.ca). Any absences that are not reported to the school will be recorded as unexcused absences on your child's report card. Additionally, as students earn more independence, specifically commuting to school alone, a message from the parents/guardians to inform the school that your child will be away spares the education team from worrying about your child's safety when they don't show up at the start of the school day.

## Excused Absence

VISII will report absences as excused when we have received verifiable communication from students' parents or guardians providing identifying information for the student, dates and expected duration of absence, and the reason for the absence. Acceptable reasons for an excused absence include:

- Illness
- Appointment
- Bereavement
- Alternate Program
- Counsellor
- Trips with educational component (Students may be required to report on their trip to illustrate the experiential learning that occurred)
- Self isolation
- Observance of a religious holiday or ceremony

## Unexcused Absence

In the absence of direct communication from the parent/guardian, student absences will be recorded and reported as unexcused. Examples of Unexcused absences include:

- Going shopping
- Going to the beach, lake for non experiential learning
- Missing the bus



## Late

A student will be marked as late if they arrive at the school 15 minutes or more after the start of the school day. If students are more than an hour late they will be marked absent for the first half of the day

## Technology

As part of our continuing plan to enrich learning by utilizing technology during the inquiry process, VISII has purchased and/or leased laptop computers which will be loaned to the student for the school year under the following conditions:

- The laptops will normally remain at school but may be signed out overnight. In the event of a student's illness or need to self-isolate, or in the event of a school-wide shift to online learning, students will be able to take their assigned laptop and related attachments such as USB mouse and charger home for as long as the student is learning at home.
- The laptop will be used by the student only as part of their inquiry process at VISII, in accordance with the school's technology use agreement.
- Hardware and software must not be altered in any way.
- Students will not deface or put stickers on laptops and will leave VISII labels in place.
- During any periods of time that the laptop is not at the school, the borrower is responsible for the security of that laptop and for taking all reasonable steps to minimize the risk of loss, theft, or damage of the laptop.
- VISII is not responsible for loss of data due to laptop malfunction or data storage failure and students are encouraged to back up their work either to cloud storage or to other data storage devices.
- Student and parent/guardian understand and consent that the school may view files stored on the laptop under the following circumstances:
  - After the laptop has been returned by the student to the school or if the laptop is returned for maintenance/support purposes.
  - Teachers or a Technology Specialist may provide assistance to the student in locating files in the presence of and at the request of the student.
  - If a student requests that a Technology Specialist access a student's laptop remotely to resolve a technical problem.
- The laptop computer and peripherals will be returned to the school in the same condition the laptop computer was originally provided, except for normal wear and tear as determined by the school.
- If a laptop is lost or significantly damaged, the parents/guardian will be responsible for reimbursing the school for the repair or replacement of the system. Replacement cost for the laptop computer is based on the purchase price of equipment with similar specifications. Repair costs will be based on actual costs of parts and labour.
- Student and parent/guardian understand and agree they are not to attempt any repairs on the laptop computer and that damaged laptop computers must be returned to the school for assessment, repair, and service.



- Parents/guardians accept financial responsibility for the laptop and associated peripherals signed out until the equipment is returned to the school.
- The laptop, including attachments, must be returned prior to the end of 2021-2022 school year, immediately in the event of school change or early withdrawal, or upon request by the school.

## WiFi and Internet Access

VISII provides WiFi access to allow learners to research information and update their online portfolios. We prefer that students access the internet from the laptops provided; VISII will ensure that the laptops have the software required for the student's inquiries. Access to the internet and email is a privilege and regular discussions take place about how learners can show responsibility in ways that gives them more freedom.



## Use of Personal Devices in School

Students are allowed to use their personal devices at school ONLY as long as they are not a distraction to the student who owns the device or to other students and ONLY as long as the devices do not interfere with regular school activities (such as learning, seminars, lunch, and outdoor time). Whether or not the device is a distraction is a judgement that will be made solely by the school staff. Students may use their phones to let parents know they have arrived at school safely or to work on inquiries.

## Indoor shoes/slippers

The majority of the school space is carpeted. Students are asked to keep a pair of indoor shoes or slippers at the school to reduce damage to the carpets and to keep the school clean, especially during the wet winter months.

## Weather Closures

Families seeking to determine if the school is closed due to weather conditions (e.g., because of heavy snowfall) should check for an email from the school, listen to CFX (AM 1070) or CBC Radio One (FM 90.5), or watch CTV Vancouver Island. Generally, VISII will close when public schools in SD61 are closed because of weather. We suggest checking more than one source, in case a power failure has occurred that prevents contact with radio and television stations.

## Lunches and Snacks

To support good nutrition and maintain positive mental energy throughout the day, we encourage your learner to bring healthy foods instead of junk foods, pop, or candy. We have full kitchen amenities, such as, fridge, stove, bowls, plates, and utensils, allowing for many more meal choices. Food should come in reusable containers to keep garbage at a minimum. We encourage the learning of self-regulation skills, including recognizing when you are hungry and



need to eat. There is a scheduled time for lunch from 11:30 pm to 12:00pm but learners can eat and drink when they feel the need for nourishment.

## Allergies

We have been asked by the Cridge Centre to be a nut-free zone in order to protect other children in the building. Thank you in advance for your understanding and compliance.

## Reporting on Learning

Reports will be given to parents three times per year regarding their students' learning. These reports will focus on competencies. Families will receive a written copy of the report as well as an interview with teaching staff to review the report together.

## What to Expect (What is different about inquiry)

VISII is not like most Grade 5, 6, 7, and 8 classrooms. There are no bells, desks, or subject blocks. Only two “subjects” are taught regularly: math and Spanish. Students “uncover” the curriculum via a combination of personal inquiries, group inquiries, and seminars. We measure competencies over the course of the entire year, which gives your child a chance to dive deep into and spend weeks on particular inquiries and then shift gears and work on something quite different the next month. Your child might spend three weeks on a science inquiry, then the next four weeks on a cultural or social inquiry, then join the whole group for a week in making a film. Over the course of the year, your child will develop the knowledge and skills for further inquiry learning or for re-entry into public school.

## Communicable Disease Protocols

VISII continues to follow the guidance given by Public Health and will update our procedures as needed. The most current Communicable Disease Plan can be found on our website. If there are significant changes during the school year, Families will be notified via email.

## Family holidays

School holidays are generous, and we appreciate adherence to the specified dates. Please request holiday extensions in writing and submit them to [admin@visii.ca](mailto:admin@visii.ca) well in advance. In the case of long extended holidays, students may be asked to do some inquiry or experiential activity that extends the learning while the child is away.

## Code of Conduct

We believe:



- That all students and staff have a right to learn and work in a safe, respectful environment that is focused on learning.
- That everyone can learn to make responsible decisions.
- That effective communication includes courtesy and respect.
- That diversity among students and staff is to be celebrated and protected.
- That commonly-accepted conduct is to be practised by all members of a learning community.
- That age, maturity, cognitive ability, and previous behaviour will be taken into consideration when VISII defines unacceptable behaviour and the consequences that follow.

## Conduct Expectations

### Acceptable Conduct

The following are encouraged within the school culture to clearly and simply convey common sense expectations for a positive, safe, caring learning environment. Students are expected to:

- WORK ON ACHIEVING LEARNING GOALS, and not interfere with others' learning.
- BE THOUGHTFUL of others, treating others with dignity and respect through offering help and encouragement in times of need. Older students are encouraged to help any student who is younger.
- BE CONSIDERATE of others by speaking politely and moving in the school and when on school activities in a courteous, mannerly, and safe fashion.
- BE INCLUSIVE of all students in play, conversation, teams, clubs, groups, etc., both in school and when on school activities. We expect students to invite other students to play, encourage each other, respect differences, and play with other students from all age levels.
- BE RESPONSIBLE for school equipment, personal property, school supplies, books, manipulatives, and other learning tools used throughout the day. This responsibility includes the safety, cleanliness, and overall care of the classroom, the building, and areas around the school. We ask all students to report any damage done to any materials, equipment, or structures.



- BE ORGANIZED by keeping materials and belongings neatly cared for in workspaces provided, by ensuring schedules are respected and by attending school punctually every day. If a student is not able to attend, parents are asked to communicate with the office.
- SOLVE PROBLEMS IN PEACEFUL WAYS by using words, using an “I message” (“I don’t like it when you....”), apologizing, walking away if necessary, and getting help from an adult if needed. All staff and many of our older students are able to help coach students through this process.
  - We focus on problem-solving by expressing feelings and needs and looking at how to avoid problems in the future.
  - We focus on the repair of social injury and/or damage.

### Unacceptable Conduct

All staff members have authority and responsibility to encourage appropriate behaviour and deal with the inappropriate behaviour of students.

The following statements are cited as examples only and are not intended to be all-inclusive. Those in authority, adult supervisors, teachers, vice-principals and principals will consider the severity and frequency of unacceptable conduct in determining appropriate disciplinary action should the following occur:

**Unacceptable behaviours**, such as those that:

- Interfere with the learning of others
- Interfere with an orderly environment
- Create unsafe conditions
- Wilfully damage the property of others

**Unacceptable actions**, such as those that:

- Involve bullying\*, harassment, or intimidation
- Involve physical violence
- Demonstrate retribution against a person who has reported incidents
- Demonstrate non-compliance with those in authority.
- Plagiarism

\* Bullying includes, but is not limited to physical or verbal intimidation, verbal harassment and cyber-bullying occurring on or off school property.) (See VISII POLICY Bullying and Harrassment)

**Illegal acts**, such as:

- Possession, use, or distribution of illegal or restricted substances

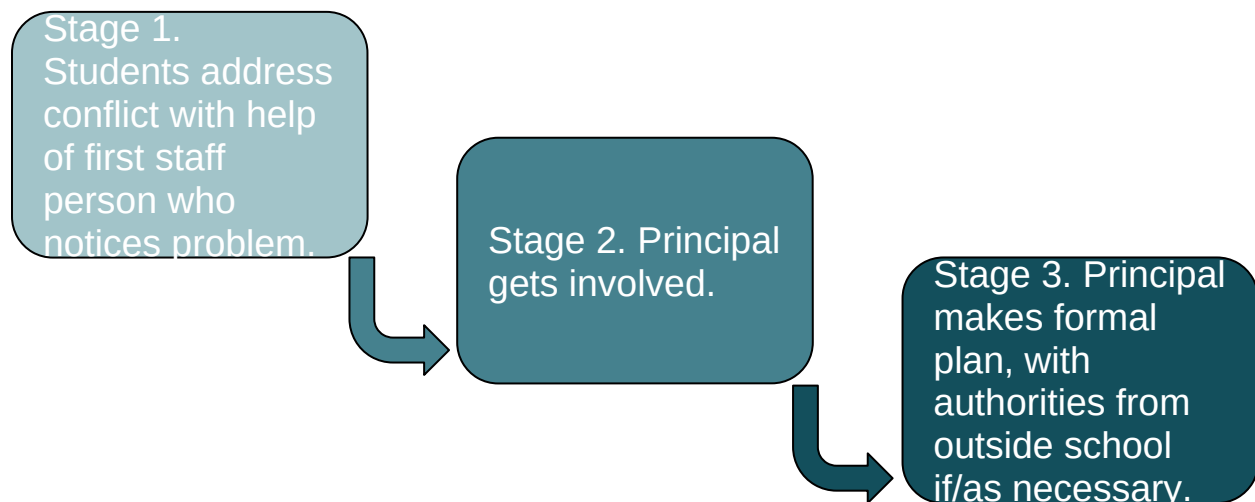


- Possession or use of weapons
- Libel, slander, or defamation
- Theft of damage to property
- As per Section 8 of Human Rights Code of British Columbia, students shall not discriminate against others on the basis of the race, religion, colour, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, family status, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or physical or mental disability. Furthermore, as per Section 7 of the Human Rights Code of British Columbia, no student shall publish or display anything that would indicate an intention to discriminate against another, or expose them to contempt or ridicule, on the aforementioned bases.

In the event of repeated contravention of the code of conduct, or if school administration feels a student cannot be safely or adequately supported by the resources available within the school, the board reserves the right to withdraw a student from VISII.

## Conflict Resolution

VISII's conflict resolution process is set out in the "Harassment and Bullying Prevention and Management Policy." Most conflicts can be resolved with a stage 1 intervention by the first staff person who notices the problem.



## Accessibility

At VISII, we believe that all members of our community have the right to be treated with dignity, given an opportunity to participate, and provided with access to learning and community. Our approach is grounded in the core provincial principles of accessibility, including adaptability, collaboration, diversity, inclusion, self-determination and universal design.



Over the coming year we will be developing feedback mechanisms designed to recognize the gaps and opportunities to improve accessibility in our school community. By engaging in thoughtful planning, meaningful engagement, training, and direct action, we aim to deliver lasting accessibility improvements for all members of our community. A feedback form can be found on our website or emails can be sent to [accessibility@visii.ca](mailto:accessibility@visii.ca)

## School Website

While the school sends out regular newsletters to keep families informed about activities and changes, the school website (<https://visii.ca>) also has many resources available to families. While much of the information on the public side of the website is geared toward prospective families learning about the school, there is also a password-protected area where parents can see the inquiries that are underway, find contact information for teachers, and resources for specific inquiries. The password for this area is provided to parents at the beginning of the school year. If you have lost or forgotten the password, please contact [admin@visii.ca](mailto:admin@visii.ca)

## School Social Media Presence

We have a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/visiinqury>) and a Twitter account ([https://twitter.com/visii\\_school](https://twitter.com/visii_school)). The main objectives of our social media presence are: (1) to spread the word about inquiry learning, and (2) to make the public aware of VISII. Ms. Littledale is behind the scenes, sharing posts and tweets that address educational issues dear to our hearts, as well as information about VISII. We rarely post pictures of students, and never include their names. Ms. Littledale occasionally posts funny or inspiring glimpses into the students' work or into the education team's daily activities. Please like/follow us and share posts with your own networks.



There is also a Facebook group for [Families of VISII](#) where parents announce plans that others are welcome to join in, such as a trip to Witty's lagoon or a festival that could interest our children.