





# Planning a Museum Visit in Staffordshire

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## Why Visit a Staffordshire Museum?

A museum visit can prove to be a powerful and lasting experience, enthusing children's interest not only in the past, but also engaging them in practical cross curricular activities and embracing a range of teaching and learning styles.

**When interviewed, children in Staffordshire have overwhelmingly requested that their schools should provide more opportunities for museum visits, in order to enhance the delivery of the national curriculum and teach important life skills.**

Museums can also play an important role in helping to deliver the aims of **Every Child Matters**. The scheme aims to ensure that every child, no matter what their background, and circumstance has the support they need to-

- ☺ be healthy
- ☺ stay safe
- ☺ enjoy and achieve
- ☺ make a positive contribution

### How can museums contribute to **Every Child Matters**?

- By delivering the five outcomes in particular enjoying and achieving and making a positive contribution.
- By being key partners in children's trusts and contributing to children and young peoples plans.
- By supporting families and promoting diversity.
- By reaching millions of children and young people through positive out-of-school activities.

In Staffordshire we have museums that reflect both the rural and industrial nature of our county. Our museums hold collections which are unique to our rich and diverse heritage. They are able to offer children of all abilities a holistic approach to gaining a real insight into the lives and times of Staffordshire people.

Whether it is through handling artefacts, engaging in role play, constructing oral histories, or investigating primary sources, children across all key stages benefit from the unique experiences that museums offer.

As well as offering insights into history and heritage, Staffordshire Museums provide pupils with the opportunity to engage in meaningful, cross curricular based activities. Links can often easily be made between History and other subjects such as Geography, Science, Art, R.E. Citizenship and Design and Technology. The diverse and comprehensive collections encourage pupils to think in a more creative and challenging way about their learning.

In doing so the museums are able to support the National Strategies by-

- \* Placing emphasis on enjoyment, involvement and motivation.
- \* Encouraging schools to think more holistically, valuing enrichment experiences.
- \* Allowing teachers to interpret the curriculum in creative and imaginative ways.

Those children, who find classroom based learning challenging, enjoy the opportunity to access ideas and emotions in non verbal ways, and often their self esteem and attainment is raised. For gifted and more able pupils, museums provide the opportunity to extend and apply their understanding at a deeper level using a range of thinking and questioning skills, thus enabling them to broaden, and accelerate their learning.

### Staffordshire Museums aim to



help teachers deliver the national curriculum targets by basing learning on objects, primary sources, sites and differentiated activities.



bring the teaching of history and other curriculum areas to life.



enable children to access their heritage and culture.



offer enjoyable and positive experiences for children across all Key Stages in a stimulating environment conducive to interactive learning.



### Choosing a Site

The most significant factor in choosing a site is whether it will significantly enhance the student's education.

What will they get out of it?

What learning will take place?

Will it enhance their understanding?

Will they enjoy the experience?

Planning a trip involves a good deal of work for yourself and colleagues, so you want to feel that it will be worthwhile and hopefully sustainable, that is you will be able to repeat the visit with other students in future years. You should then be able to build on your initial experiences and form a working relationship with museum staff and a better understanding of the museum or site to further improve learning outcomes.

The following considerations will influence your decision.

### Curriculum.

Will a visit to a particular museum fit your curriculum? Indeed will it offer some exciting cross curricular teaching opportunities. It is always better to visit a site when you are actually studying a unit of history/ geography/ science relevant to your visit. If in doubt teachers should consult the National curriculum at <http://www.nc.uk.net/webdav/harmonise?Page/@id=6004&Subject/@id=3251> or a relevant examination specification.

It is worth remembering that a visit to a Staffordshire museum will enable you to deliver a cross curricular experience for your pupils'. Elements of local history, as well as practical geography skills, hands on science, design and technology exploration, and art appreciation can all be delivered effectively. Also by considering how a museum portrays the past you are focusing on the key historical skills of interpretation as well as enquiry.

Joint trips can spread the load in terms of administration, but you must not lose sight of the initial reasons for taking the trip and it must be clear who has overall control.

Timing of the visit is an important factor. Trips to outdoor sites are better conducted in the summer term or early autumn when the weather is better, whereas a visit to an indoor site can be made at any time.

### **Cost**

Is the trip affordable? Will your parents be able to afford the contribution you will ask them for, or can you subsidise the trip from other funds? Can you provide for students with financial hardship? Remember, your trip should be as inclusive as possible. Will disabled pupils be able to take part or will they need specialist support? If you cannot gain sufficient funds to run the trip then think again. It may be possible to select an equally relevant visit at a different time that is affordable.

### **Distance**

How far is the museum from your school? While it may be important to broaden the horizons of your students, time spent on a long coach journey can create a good deal of stress for yourself and pupils and is unlikely to enhance their learning. Make sure that you can get to and from the museum within a reasonable amount of time before you organise further. The age of the students will be an important factor.

### **Enjoyment**

This is vitally important. If students have a good visit they will want to return again to museums and learn to appreciate their role in preserving, presenting and influencing people's attitudes towards the past. This means that it is crucial to organise the trip well at all levels, including the activities that the pupils will be engaged in at the site and on return to school.



## **Getting the Go Ahead**

It is important that you consult with your head teacher before any booking or detailed planning for the visit is made. It would be useful to outline:

**Why you wish to go?** Which curriculum area the visit will enhance?

**When you wish to go?** There may need to be some negotiation depending on school diaries.

**What is the approximate cost of the trip?** See section here titled "cost"

**How you intend to travel.**

**Any additional adults you will be taking with you.** A ratio of 1:6 for under 7 and 1:10 for over 7. Also the male/female balance and a nominated first aid officer.



## **Pre-Visit**

A pre visit to the museum is advisable if the visit is to be a success. It will be necessary to make arrangements with museum staff, in particular an education officer, prior to any visit. Always phone ahead and outline the purpose of your trip and what you would like to do.

Arrange with school for supply cover if your visit is in school time.

If you cannot make a pre-visit it is imperative that you contact the museum to go over the necessary detail.

While you are there you will need to find out:

The price for group bookings

Details about the location (toilets, shop, meeting place, car /coach park drop off areas)

Classroom facilities. Are the classrooms large enough and equipped with the resources you will need on the day. Make a list of any additional resources you will need to supply from school.

Suitable facilities for lunch. Do you need to book the room in advance?

Activities/ question sheets. Are they suitable? Do they need changing or do you need to provide some of your own? Do you have to pay for photocopying?

Are there any additional activities you can provide for your more/less able pupils?



## Timing

During your pre visit you will need to consider the structure of your day.

Take into account the time of any activities and make allowances for transition between one activity and the next. Also decide on how much input you actually need from the museum staff.

What exactly do you want the children to experience?

Can you provide this independently?



Whether you decide on a half or full day visit allow time for the following:

An opportunity to look around the museum, with staff, or the aid of a guide booklet or audio cassette.

Practical sessions including role play, handling objects, investigating primary sources and watching demonstrations from staff.

Lunch break should ideally be 30-45 minutes with some opportunity for the toilet and supervised recreation.

Opportunity to use the shop. (If given plenty of notice museums may be happy to make up gift bags for a nominal sum for collection on the day. Thus saving time.)



## Risk Assessment

Risk assessments are legal requirements. A copy of the museums risk assessment form will prove most useful when completing your own risk assessment for school.

Always ensure:

You complete the standard school form available from the person in charge of school trips.

Refer to the risk assessment from the museum and transport organisation if you have them.

Identify risks such as crossing roads, walking on uneven terrain, physical activities, and use of equipment.

Consider the risks of group compositions, i.e. children with physical disabilities or challenging behaviour.

Consequences of adverse weather conditions.

Although CRB investigations are routinely carried out on employees of museums, it may be advisable to check this, especially if the museum's staff are working directly with the children.



## Planning for the Visit

Once you have decided upon your trip and a date there are a number of things you need to do.

### Booking Forms

These are an essential part of the visit and need to be completed as soon as possible . Not only do the forms provide information about the school to the museums, but the form also enables museums to tailor the visit to meet your individual needs.

Booking Form usually asks you for:

- Group leader.
- Age of pupils
- Number of children and adults visiting
- Dates and Times
- Detail of requested activities.

### Transport Arrangements

School Minibus:

Ensure that any school transport and a qualified driver is available on the day.

Coach:

It is a good idea to contact two or three companies for quotes first. Always check that the coach is fitted with safety belts, and ask for a copy of the coaches risk assessment if available.

Train:

Investigate routes and times and make enquiries into group rates. Always pre book places.

Walking:

It is advisable to check the route and assess where the state of pavements and where the safest crossing places are. Before your visit, check for road - works. It is also advisable to check the weather forecast and advise pupil's on what to wear accordingly.

### Letter To Parents

Many schools have a standard letter which they send to parents. The letters should always include:

- The purpose of the visit and how it fits in with the schools curriculum.
- The date
- The times of departure from and arrival back to school.
- Cost of the trip.
- Details of spending money.
- A permission slip.



Additional information may include:

- A deadline for and information on where to send money and permission slips.(A week before the visit is a good deadline to avoid any last minute panic.)
- Information on packed lunches and arrangements for free school meals.
- Details of what to wear on the day. (Uniform/non-uniform, water proof clothes, sun screen hats etc.)
- Any equipment the pupils will need such as pens, rulers, cameras etc.
- If your return is outside the school day parents need to be informed that they are responsible for ensuring their child's safety from school.

In some cases it may be necessary for schools to outline that they reserve the right to decide who shall go on the visit. This acknowledges that some children may be excluded from the trip due to social, emotional and behavioural circumstances.

## Permission Slips

All permission slips need to be collated into a register and photocopied. The register should simply have the headings,

Name / Permission Y/N / Payment Y/N

Children should not participate in any school trip if the permission slip has not been returned.

It is useful to take the permission slips or register with you on the trip. Details such as next of kin, contacts and medical requirements should remain in school with the school secretary.

## Informing Colleagues

It is important to inform certain colleagues of your trip:

Your **colleagues**. The trip may impact upon them in some way. i.e. meetings, rehearsals, assemblies.

The **school kitchen** will need to be informed of the numbers of children who need free packed lunches, and compensate by catering for fewer children.

The school **secretary/bursar** will need to be informed especially if they are involved in collating the permission slips and payment.

The **caretaker** may need to make arrangements for the buses or coaches to enter and exit school.

## Preparing The Staff

It would be useful to have a meeting with all staff and volunteers involved to outline details of the visit.

Each adult supervisor should be provided with:

A pack containing

- an itinerary,
- a map of the museum,
- a list of group members, and any medical/dietary requirements.
- a summary of the learning outcomes from the visit.
- copies of the activities , main teaching points and any answer sheets.
- emergency contact numbers.
- a copy of the risk assessment.



Staff should be informed of which coach they are to travel on, to and from the site, and which children will be with them. It is useful to leave this information in school in case of an accident.

## Preparing The Children

In order for pupils to get the most out of their museum visit, time should be given to discuss the plans for the day. Share with the children:

Details of the venue.

Date and times of the visit.

What they need to wear.

What they need to bring. (water proof clothes, sunscreen, hats, cameras, pencils etc)

Children should be given detailed information on what they can expect to see and learn from the museum visit. As well as outlining your objectives for the visit encourage them to think about what they would like to get from the visit.

It is often useful to give children time to ask any questions about the visit.



### Before you leave

Make sure that you arrive at school early and run through the following check list to enable you to leave on time. Do you have?

packed lunches for those on free lunches

a first aid kit?

bin bags for litter and tissues/kitchen roll?

a mobile phone (which should be left on in case the school is trying to contact you and contain the numbers of other staff on the visit and a school contact number).

copies of the lists of students actually on the trip. (A list of emergency contact numbers and medical notes as well as group lists should be left with the designated contact person at school – often the school secretary).

work sheets, paper or booklets that students will need

some spare pens, pencils and sharpeners

digital camera or other such as video

credit card in case of emergency.

**It is vital to take a precise and accurate register before you leave. Do not simply conduct a head count.**

In the case of any absentees, amend your lists and inform the contact person dealing with trips and the school office before you leave. During the visit each group leader should check the names at regular intervals during the day. Take the register before leaving on the coach or train to return. (If you are not travelling too far it could be a good idea to have a member of staff bring their car to the site. This enables someone to return to school if necessary, but make sure that they have insurance cover in the event of them having to transport a pupil).

### During the Journey

It is wise to establish good relations with your coach driver and discuss their rules. For instance many drivers dislike pupils eating chewing gum. If you are not travelling far it is wise to ban eating and drinking and make this clear before you board the vehicle.

Check for litter at the end of the journey. Make sure that seat belts are fastened and kept on at all times and place staff at strategic seats to maintain good behaviour on the journey.

In the event of delay make sure that you phone the contact person at school to alert them of you late return.



### During the Visit

It is best to supervise students at all times, but at some sites it may be necessary for pupils to work for periods of time in an unsupervised situation. If this is the case then make sure that students stay in groups of at least three at all times. Make sure that there is a known reference point for pupils to return to and that a member of staff will be there during the visit.

Students should never leave the site and be supervised closely when in shops.

Be aware of members of the public. It is worth impressing on students that their behaviour can be observed by adults who have nothing to do with school and that politeness and consideration for others will create a positive impression of their school.

Ensure that students who have specific medical needs are catered for and that any medication needed by them is provided.

## Activities

The most important part of your visit is the learning that will take place. The preliminary visit should have enabled you to assess the activities provided by the museum. It may be that these are sufficient to deliver your learning outcomes but it may be necessary for you to construct some activities of your own that pupils complete during the visit. Where this is the case, bear in mind the following points that could direct your thinking.

Avoid complex worksheets with single unrelated answers

Try to develop more searching “big questions” or a series of open ended questions that relate to areas of the museum

Provide a number of separate activities that enable students either a choice of route or a varied programme of tasks that relate to the topic that the museum deals with.

Consider the museum as an interpretation of history. How has the museum been organised? What is its focus? What has been left out?

Allow students to work in pairs or larger teams to address such questions

Make sure the students have plenty to do and are positively occupied at all times.

All activities should enhance learning and not simply fill in time

Share and discuss any activities you create with the museum staff.



## Follow Up Activities

As stated above the visit should fit within the programmes of study that you are delivering, therefore it is essential that you reflect on the visit on you return to school. The visit could be the basis of extended work within any key stage, and could prompt a range of activities in the classroom.

In particular the use of digital or video cameras might lead to the production of a film or photo story or simple power point to highlight aspects of the visit.

Primary and secondary sources might be used to develop further research associated with the topic that the museum covers, or to explore whether the museums portrayal is indeed an accurate one. Thus there are considerable opportunities to develop high level historical skills of enquiry and interpretation and to consider the role of museums within our culture.

Pupils could be asked to develop their own museum or re design the one they visited. It is also worthwhile asking the views of the pupils on their visit through a questionnaire and sharing these evaluations with the museum.

IT research could well enhance the above activities.