

LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM HERITAGE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

Case Study

SMALL MUSEUM

Getting the most from this case study.....

- When you read this case study, you will find it useful to have a copy of the Quality Indicators or the Quality Badge SEF to hand.
- You will see that the case study has sections of text highlighted in bold. This text indicates an aspect of practice at this organisation that can be directly linked to a Quality Indicator.
- At the end of a section of bold text or at the end of the sentence containing that text, you will see a reference number in brackets. To find out what that number means, go to the last page of the case study, which contains a table listing all of these reference numbers. Next to each reference number there is a Quality Indicator number/s.
- Look up the Quality Indicator number/s on your SEF and to find out how a specific aspect of practice at this organisation might help them to get the Quality Badge.

Introduction

Hanning Museum is a small volunteer-run museum with an extensive collection of Saxon objects, many found in the local area. This case study focuses on a visit by a group from a local primary school.

Description of Practice

We had a call from a teacher of a Key Stage 2 group at a primary school a couple of miles from the museum. She had seen a recent article in the local paper in which, as curator, I was interviewed about the recent discovery of some Saxon coins in a local field. The coins are now on display in the museum alongside our display about the local (Saxon) church and as the teacher was about to do a project on the Saxons with her class she thought it looked like a good idea for a visit.

The phone call was answered by one of our volunteer stewards who was on duty that morning. Using a checklist, he asked for more information about **what the teacher wanted to get from the visit** so that we could be better prepared and the teacher could be reassured that the visit would complement her classroom work and pose no health and safety concerns **(1)**. The checklist covers subject matter (i.e. Saxon history in this case), skills (we've listed several from the National Curriculum including chronology, historical enquiry, speaking and listening, working together, and awareness of diversity and identity) and any learning issues which we should know about (e.g. **children with special needs**), as well as arrival and departure times **(2)**.

The steward then **described the full range of activities which the museum could offer** – a guided tour, a handling session and time in the galleries for investigation work in small groups – as well as the charge for the service and the ratio of adults to pupils that we require **(3)**. He told the teacher that all of **this information, as well as any charges, health and safety and other legal stuff, would be described on a sheet** which would be sent out with the letter of confirmation **(4)**. The letter would also say **who's responsible for what on the day** and our **processes for evaluating** the success of the visit **(5)**. He also noted that **all the relevant information was on the museum's website (6)**.

As the discovery of the Saxon coins was fairly recent, we had not yet prepared a 'Saxons' activity at the museum, but we were keen to work with the teacher to develop one and the steward told the teacher that one of our 'learning volunteers' would be in touch to discuss it further – the best thing would be for the **teacher to drop in at the museum** after school one day **(7)**.

After the call he completed an internal booking form for the visit with details of the name of the school and teacher, number and age of pupils, subject, teacher's aims for the visit, and a series of tick boxes noting **any information and resources that were being sent to the school** (e.g. risk assessment guidelines, description of activities which will be offered and a timetable for the day) **(8)**. An **evaluation form** was also included in the letter **(9)**.

He then passed on the information to our 'learning volunteers' who contacted the teacher and arranged to meet at the museum to talk over the proposed visit. They went through the programme and agreed on what would take place when. They also **discussed the preparation for the visit**: the school had its own resources on the Saxons but wanted something local, and we were able to provide pictures of the coins and of the Saxon bits of the church. We also had a print of the manor's entry in the Domesday Book **(10)**. They also **discussed follow-up** and suggested that the children might like to prepare some captions for Saxon objects in the museum, especially the new coins **(11)**. The captions could be based on Saxon riddles. The teacher was enthused by the meeting as the educational potential was so much more promising than she'd first thought.

We got ready for the visit, which would include a handling session and guided tour, to be led by our two learning volunteers. Last year they attended a **training session** at a regional museum, which covered essential heritage education skills including enquiry-based learning and the use of open-ended questions in guided tours, as well as raising awareness of different learning styles **(12)**. The training session also explored the unique ways that museums can support learning, defined as 'Generic Learning Outcomes' (see www.inspiringlearningforall.org.uk) Following the training session, we had **re-thought our education policy** and decided to set aside (and indeed buy in) some items for a handling collection **(13)**. We also developed a tour designed to consider different types of historical evidence and ways of interpreting what the evidence means – really just a vehicle for children to look at our displays from an interesting angle. The two volunteers have themselves been passing on this good practice to a new volunteer who has recently joined the museum and would be shadowing the school visit.

On the day of the visit one of the learning volunteers welcomed the group, **outlining what the pupils would learn during their visit and bringing any health and safety matters to their attention (14)**. **Coats and bags were stored in a corner within view of the reception desk (15)**. The teachers and other supervising adults were each given an outline of the day's programme, with some **pointers for discussion** related to the things they would see during the visit **(16)**.

The class was split into two groups, with sub-groups supervised by teaching assistants and parents. **One group went on a guided tour while the other had a handling session in a corner of one of the galleries (17)**. Both sessions had been carefully designed to meet learning objectives related to skills and knowledge in the curriculum, with minor amendments to address some particular objectives discussed with the teacher when she visited. **The volunteers frequently referred to the learning**

objectives during the session to reinforce them. A key feature of each session is its emphasis on discovery and creativity, using open-ended questions to bring out personal responses rather than ‘right and wrong’ answers. The volunteers pace the sessions, changing the activity every few minutes to keep the children’s attention (18). In planning the sessions they have also **varied the delivery** so that a range of learning styles can be met; in this case, they used a Saxon riddle to inspire some children, but also looked at Saxon works of art, and invited children to handle objects and describe what they felt like **(19)**. They also used physical movement, getting children to pose in a **Saxon scene**, which the teacher recorded on a digital camera **(20)**.

At the end of the visit, time was set aside for a plenary session framed around the question, ‘what have you learnt today?’. Children’s comments were sought through the use of a ‘post-it board’. The teacher was reminded about the **evaluation form** she’d been sent, which she was able to complete before leaving the museum **(21)**. We have designed the form to encourage constructive criticism, not just record positive feedback. It also asks how well the pre-agreed learning objectives have been met.

After the class had left, I joined the volunteers to **discuss the day (22)**. This was also an opportunity for the trainee volunteer to clarify any points arising from the sessions (e.g. behaviour management techniques, open-ended questioning, learning styles, etc.). The two leaders also swapped notes so that **future sessions could be improved (23)**. They are familiar with each activity so that they can be flexible, standing in for each other or offering customised sessions for special groups. I was there just to offer ‘official’ support but **I also wanted to be able to pick up any issues which might affect the running of the museum on a wider level (24)**.

The volunteers noted that the teacher suggested an improvement to the guided tour so that the children could find out more about what a museum is and what goes on behind the scenes. This is exactly the kind of thing I can support, and we **decided that a conservation activity will be included in the handling session**, comparing an original but fragile and damaged object with a replica and discussing how the museum might balance the need to conserve with the need to interpret **(25)**. When available I will drop in to be interviewed by children for this bit of the visit.

The teacher has also said that future visits might be difficult due to the high cost of transport to the museum and even the small charge we need to make for the sessions, as the school is in an area of some social deprivation. This led us to discuss ways that we could address this issue – by taking collections into the school, or starting a subscription scheme whereby schools pay an annual flat fee for unlimited visits.

Please see the next page for the Quality Indicator Reference List

Reference List

Reference no.	Quality Indicator
1	1b, 5a
2	1d
3	1c, 3a, 5a
4	2a, 2b, 6b, 6c, 6d
5	1a, 1e
6	2a
7	1a
8	1a
9	1e
10	1f
11	1f
12	3e
13	4c, 5b
14	3d, 6a
15	3c, 3d
16	1e, 3a, 3e
17	3c
18	3e
19	3a
20	3b
21	3f, 4b
22	3f, 4a
23	4c
24	4c, 5d
25	4c, 5c

Further information

For more information about LOtC, the Quality Badge and learning through heritage, visit the following websites:

www.lotc.org.uk

www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk

www.gem.org.uk

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