

WEST MIDLANDS
MUSEUM
DEVELOPMENT

DELIVERED BY

Ironbridge
BIRTHPLACE OF INDUSTRY

Education Audit Report

Prepared by:
Partners in Creative Learning

Date: March 2018

Arts and Culture Education Audit

Contents

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Original Goals | 2 |
| Executive Summary | 4 |
| Numbers | 6 |
| Narrative | 7 |
| Lessons Learned in Delivery | 16 |
| Recommendations | 17 |
| Appendices | 21 |

Appendix 1: School trips to museums: Survey report

Appendix 2: School trips to museums: Forum report

Original Goals

The network of museums, galleries and heritage sites in the West Midlands region have reported a dramatic decrease in participation on educational programmes over the last 12 months; or where numbers have remained steady significant efforts to increase participation have had limited success. When asked why they believe this is, the following responses are the most common:

- Changes in curriculum which they believe have taken away their key strengths
- Cost of transportation for schools
- Limited facilities at the site, such as a lack of dedicated space for lunch or indoor activities, toilet facilities etc.

Museums in the West Midlands have a richness of collections and breadth of subject matter and the West Midlands Museum Development (WMMD) programme aims to unlock their potential!

Our vision is that museums in the West Midlands will provide high quality arts and cultural experiences for children and young people and that more young people will take part in cultural education activities at museums across the region.

Objectives of the work

To work with 10 Accredited (or Working Towards Accreditation) museums, galleries and heritage sites who have an existing educational offer and have seen a decrease in participation, to:

- Review their existing offer
- Gather feedback from the target audience (schools, educational specialists and children and young people)
- Provide insight into new opportunities for museums such as, working with Academies and [Local Cultural Education Partnerships \(LCEP\)](#)

To provide comprehensive feedback on the above in the form of a detailed report on how the educational offer can be improved at each venue.

To provide WMMD with a report that summarises the findings from the audit and provides recommendations for support for the sector.

The commissioned work was delivered by two organisations.

- Schoolzone: Created an online survey, for teachers within the region, exploring specific questions relating to museum visits and an online forum in which museums could also participate. They also provided curriculum reviews where teachers critically evaluated individual educational offers based on the museum website and other communications.
- Partners in Creative Learning (PiCL): Facilitated face to face workshops with teachers and museum staff leading on the education programmes

Executive Summary

The museum, arts, heritage and cultural sector has reported a significant drop in engagement with schools, specifically external visits to venues in the last 12-24 months.

The drop in numbers correlates with the recent changes to the curriculum, supply cover rules and budgets, with schools facing ever increasing pressures to focus on areas such as Literacy, Maths and Science subjects.

The objective of the work was to find out whether there is still an appetite for schools to undertake educational visits and if so;

- What type of venue do they want to take their pupils to?
- What is important to them?
- What barriers do they face?
- How can museums and cultural organisations inform schools about the high quality learning and enrichment opportunities they can provide?

Museums had to apply to be part of the audit, those who applied cited a drop in numbers and an overall a sense of disappointment and frustration with not knowing what could be done to increase engagement with schools. The participating museums ranged from wholly volunteer led, Local Authority (LA) and independently funded museums with significant visitor numbers.

The audit, delivered in partnership with Schoolzone and PiCL supported by WMMD, was designed to engage teachers in an online survey and forum as well as face to face workshops. A curriculum review provided an individual approach whilst the workshops provided a general insight of the education provision coupled with facilitated reflection and actions for the museum.

With regards to what makes an attractive education offer for schools, both the online activity and workshops produced similar findings.

The content of the offer needs to be:

- High quality, with immersive and hands on activity at the core, a special experience that cannot be replicated in school

- Linked to the curriculum, with teachers able to see clear learning outcomes

Marketing and communications:

- Teachers preferred method of communication is via email. However it is the organisation's website that will be the reason why a teacher will or will not book a visit, if there is no prior experience
- The offer needs to be clear, inspiring, provide key information and be easily searchable with a simple booking system
- The majority of teachers do not have time to contact museums during school hours, so need to be able to make a decision based on the information provided by the museums website or associated marketing material

Outreach and relationship building:

- Teachers want to make the most of their visit, so by adding value to their experience they are more likely to trust and value the relationship. This could be something as simple as providing a quiz before the visit, the offer to loan items or to deliver a class talk

All visits need to be well organised with appropriate facilities, with risk assessments and activity plans available in advance.

The barriers for schools are mostly transport and other associated costs. This is aside from the pressures of delivering the curriculum, all of which are outside of the museums' control. It is important that any other challenges schools and teachers face are removed to encourage participation and visits.

The findings of the audit have proven that schools still have an appetite to visit museums and therefore it is important that a high quality, immersive offer, linked to the curriculum is easily available. If this is achieved then schools will readily bring their young people to museums enabling them to experience the richness of learning opportunities on offer.

Numbers

10 museums were selected, ranging from small volunteer led museums to large independent museums and LA museums.

For the Schoolzone survey and forum, 231 teachers responded to the survey and the forum received 140 comments from both teachers and museum staff.

The face to face workshops were attended by 13 teachers, with 541 teachers invited to participate in visits, workshops and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions.

Narrative

The decrease in participation on educational programmes has been felt across the board within the cultural and heritage sector over the last 12-24 months. So what needs to happen to build relationships, increase engagement with schools to ensure that the value of visiting museums is recognised?

WMMD offered the opportunity for museums to take part in an audit of their educational programmes, through an open application process. 10 museums were selected, ranging from small volunteer led museums to large independent museums and LA museums.

The audit process was launched at an event held at The Pen Museum in June 2017, which the majority of participating museums attended. They were introduced to the consultants and heard from museums who had successfully engaged schools and increased visits by refocusing their existing education offer.

The museums were asked what they currently delivered, what they wanted to do more of or improve and the barriers that they faced. Overall participants wanted to engage with more schools, improve or refine their education offer and have more effective marketing. The barriers faced included time, capacity, funding and communication with schools and teachers.

Survey and Forum

Schoolzone canvassed the museums to determine both the survey questions and specific questions for the online forum, PiCL also consulted with each museum to understand their context, aims, challenges and what they would like to find out from the series of workshops.

The online forum covered several topics and museums were able to participate and ask specific questions relating to their offer. The forum topics included:

- School priorities when deciding on a school trip
- What makes a museum trip a success?
- What kind of things tend to work well during museum trips?
- Subject focuses

- How can museums get teachers attention?
- Reasons for a decline in school trips to museums

These discussions provided 'food for thought' for the museums that participated. (See Appendix 1)

The Schoolzone survey focused on the age range of pupils, type and location of schools visits, barriers to visits, the support and facilities important to them and their preferred method of communication. (See Appendix 2)

The findings support the observations from the online forum and validate them with a regional focus. The survey report and the forum report should be read together.

Face to Face Workshops

The aim of the workshops were to consult with young people and teachers on the education offer provided by their local museum; whilst providing an opportunity for them to experience the museum and build relationships.

Schools were invited to participate via an email invite and follow up phone communications. Unfortunately that approach proved to get very little traction, feedback received concluded that the timing was too close to the end of term and that schools needed a longer lead in period. Issues around transportation were also highlighted.

There was some success with a school interested in the workshop at one museum and another museum also delivered a workshop for two schools they had not previously worked with.

To ensure all participating museums had the same opportunity, it was decided to review the approach based on the results from the forum and initial feedback from the telephone follow ups. Twilight CPD sessions were developed for teachers to share tips and techniques that could be used in the curriculum. They also had the opportunity to visit and explore the museum to experience the education offer.

Emails were sent out prior to the summer holidays, with hard copy letters and telephone follow ups administered in September. This approach increased the interest but numbers were still low, with little or no take up for some museums.

The workshops that were attended provided an opportunity for rich conversations with some key themes emerging that echoed the findings from the survey and forum. The museums were able to gather immediate feedback through discussion and build relationships. It also provided a platform for the museums to showcase their education offer to schools that they may not have previously worked with. Several teachers who attended, stated that they would look to book a future school visit to the museum.

Curriculum Review

Each museum received a curriculum review conducted by a teacher, which was an analysis of their education offer as communicated via their website and marketing material. Each teacher was recruited based on the subject steer specified by the participating museum and they critically evaluated the material provided.

The Findings

There was a considerable amount of data and feedback through the different approaches, with some key themes emerging.

It was found that, “Schools have the same ambitions for school trips as they always have”, “It is mainly the barriers that have increased”.

What museums need to do now is to, as far as possible, reduce the impact of those barriers, effectively communicate the benefit and quality of their education programme and continue to deliver high quality learning opportunities.

The Key Themes

The content and quality of the education offer:

Both the survey and workshops found that it is vital to have an appropriate, well designed and innovative offer.

Schools will prioritise visits where they can gain an experience that cannot be replicated in school, they want the offer to be highly interactive and immersive, with hands on activity. Schools are likely to only undertake one visit to a museum annually and therefore it needs to be appropriate and special.

The workshop attendees were clear that direct curriculum links are drivers for schools when planning visits, with the forum participants also in agreement. However this can be cross curricular.

The museum staff are also recognised as one of the most important elements of the visit, their knowledge, experience and interaction with the pupils are viewed as being of considerable importance to teachers. The visit and activities need to be well designed and planned, so that teachers can enjoy the experience as well as the pupils. The museum staff are deemed to be experts, in both subject and delivery, and it is important to utilise and build on this.

There are potential opportunities for delivering areas of the curriculum, such as Maths, Science Technology Engineering Art and Maths (STEAM) and Literacy, as well as the specific history offer delivered by individual museums. However diversification of the education offer to include such subjects should receive careful consideration if it is not a strength of the museum or its staff; as it is the quality of activities not deliverable in school and expertise of museum staff which is extremely important to teachers when deciding on visits.

From both the workshops and survey, the important things for the teachers to know in advance are the learning outcomes and the type and style of activities on offer.

Marketing and communications

The participating museums, and museums in general, are keen to know the best way to market to and communicate with teachers; for them to see their offer, rather than it getting filtered by the front-facing school staff. No magic formula emerged from the audit, with teachers overwhelmingly wanting to receive communication via email. However some tips were provided during the workshops.

The best way of marketing is through developing relationships and to persist with relevant, well timed offers and opportunities. Some teachers suggested that themed and time limited marketing are a useful prompt for schools to book. They want to regularly hear about what is going on, with one teacher saying “keep letting us know you are there”.

The survey and workshops highlighted the importance of the museums website, its searchability, content and resources. The individual curriculum reviews of online material also highlighted what information or functions teachers feel should be accessible online:

- Health and Safety information; the ability to download risk assessments in advance
- The cost of a visit
- Easy to search for appropriate activities. Sometimes there is too much choice, or it is not targeted enough.
- The timing of visits. Some current timings are restrictive to the school day and schools require more flexibility.

The website should be easy to navigate. Teachers need to be able to clearly see all the offerings, easily establish costs and download relevant resources.

Other information or functions teachers want to see include:

- Curriculum links
- Example activities for the session
- The facilities availability i.e. for lunch, wet weather, toilets, coat and bag storage
- An online enquiry or booking form

Through this process, it became clear that teachers conduct research and decide on external visits outside of school hours, therefore decisions are often made based on the museums' website. Teachers are time pressured so the more information they have and the further along the planning and booking process they can go online, the more likely they are to book.

In opposition to this, information accessed via the museum's website can be so comprehensive a visit is not required and therefore a balance must be sought.

Relationships are also important; a significant proportion of schools would book visits due to previous experiences or word of mouth. Museums should continue to maintain current relationships and invest time networking to build new ones.

Costs and barriers

Transport and cost is often the biggest barrier for schools. This coupled with a museum's need to generate income and improve sustainability makes for a difficult challenge to overcome.

Pressures on teachers' time and curriculum delivery is also cited as a significant barrier in the decision to take children out of school. More members of staff are needed to be in attendance on school visits, with cover also being required back at school. New policies such as 'rarely cover' have contributed to these pressures.

Outreach and resources

The workshops suggest that teachers appreciate things being taken into schools such as outreach sessions, loan boxes, extended learning tasks (pre or post visit) and other resources.

This was supported to some extent by the survey and forum. Schools expressed an interest in 'loan boxes' but want accompanying resources to support learning, including museum staff to go into the school.

By using outreach visits, museums can demonstrate the expertise and value provided by its staff, instilling a sense of confidence within teachers when they decide on a visit.

It is important to balance the outreach offer, so that schools still need to visit the museum to get the full immersive experience and benefit from the expertise of its staff.

Follow Up Sessions

Following interim reports and workshop headline data, participating museums were invited to attend a reflection day to collectively identify key messages and explore ways to address the findings. Four museums were in attendance and the following four key themes were considered:

Transport

Schools feel that if they are investing in a coach then they would want a full day experience and would potentially travel further than local venues. Based on this museums discussed extending their targeted marketing to within a two hour driving distance. Partnerships with coach companies where discounted rates could be offered and the potential of sharing mini-buses were also explored.

The perception that transport was not seen, by schools, as such a valuable cost was also discussed. Participating museums who had included the cost of transport in the overall cost of a visit appeared to reduce this as a barrier. From the experience shared during this session offering 'free' transport receives more uptake than offering 'free' workshops.

Museums could also encourage schools to travel by train, where possible and utilise the train journey as a learning opportunity. By providing activities for pupils to complete to and from the museum could potentially add value to all visits.

Content of the offer

All participants agreed curriculum links are important and that the quality of the offer is a determining factor in engaging schools. Discussions prompted the following considerations for museums:

- The opening hours and timings of sessions need to be flexible and appropriate
- Ensure the activity is immersive whilst considering the impact on group size
- Be experts and demonstrate the value and skills of museum staff
- Add value by using [Arts Award](#) and have an understanding of [Artsmark](#)
- Research the curriculum and exam boards for potential content and learning outcomes
- How attractive badges such as [Sanford](#) and [Learning Outside the Classroom](#) are to schools?

Marketing

A considerable period of time was spent discussing effective marketing. Ideas for consideration included:

- Time limited offers, both in terms of content and special pricing
- Providing information and resources as part of a museum's regular communication with schools
- Networking; hosting teacher meet ups, coffee mornings, LCEP meetings and CPD sessions
- Ensure websites are effective, up to date and include an online booking or enquiry form, associated risk assessments and/or session plans, images, clarity of offer and case studies or testimonials

- Partnerships with other venues, cultural partners and museums

Outreach

It is felt that schools appreciate loan boxes and talks or visits delivered in school by museum staff. But there is a balance to be had. Museums should ensure such activity is a taste of the greater experience of visiting the venue. Museums expressed concern about the administration and capacity to be able to deliver outreach.

Museum participants explored what they would like to be able to deliver relating to these four areas and identified practical changes that they could start to implement.

Such changes included:

- Regular marketing; updating websites, distribution of newsletters and printed material to target schools
- Developing an 'Arts Award in a day' offer
- Training for volunteers
- Developing school assembly sessions
- Exploring the potential of online booking forms
- Collecting testimonials
- A focus on gathering feedback and evaluation
- Consideration of Facebook as a marketing tool in addition to museum websites
- Further consultation with more schools on the education offer

Final Feedback Sessions

Each museum received a final feedback session with PiCL, where all the findings were reflected on and mutually agreed actions for each museum determined. These actions form part of the individual museum reports.

Feedback on the Education Audit process:

All museums found the Education Audit a useful process. The majority commented on not only the learning from the audit, but that they also felt more positive. Some of this was due to the fact they felt they were not alone in the challenges faced. They realised the value in networking and sharing practice and wanted to continue this in the future.

Further support, identified by the participating museums, that would be beneficial included:

- Support with understanding the new curriculum and developing linked activity
- Marketing training and advice; how to create great content and develop a marketing strategy
- Effective communication with schools
- Fundraising for education work

Lessons Learned in Delivery

It was challenging to engage schools in the face to face workshops, the letters to named staff were more successful than the emails to named staff either via individual or general email addresses. It was also evident that twilight sessions were more attractive to teachers.

Timings for workshops, for both museums and schools, need to have long lead in periods to ensure the greatest take up and participation.

Recommendations

The narrative report along with the survey and forum reports provide some rich and informative information that naturally feeds into recommendations for all museums, galleries and cultural organisations developing education work with schools.

The two main areas, under the control of the museum and that would have the most significant impact, are the education offer and how this is communicated and marketed. This is where the core of the recommendations will be focused.

The content and quality of the education offer:

- Research the new curriculum and identify how the education offer can complement and enrich it. This should include consulting further with schools to gain a better understanding of their chosen topics.
- Research 'bought in' curriculums such as Cornerstones and exam board schemes of work, to further understand potential links
- Make sure the education offer and associated workshops are immersive and interactive. Communicate this effectively to schools.
- Include learning outcomes for activities. These may only be three to five short sentences that demonstrate what the pupils will be doing and what they will have learnt by the end of the day.
- Provide ongoing CPD and training for both museum staff and volunteers on using different approaches to learning which utilise interactivity and other effective engagement methods
- Consider using [Arts Award](#) to complement the offer, i.e. 'Arts Award in a day', and ensure all work with children and young people is in line with Arts Council England's (ACE) [Quality Principles](#)

- Planning and organisation is key. Museums should provide the following:
 - **Pre-visit:**
 - Opportunities to carry out a pre-visit for teachers
 - Timings for the day
 - Risk assessments
 - Details of facilities available such as appropriate room arrangements and whether exclusive access is available, bag and coat storage and toilet facilities
 - Details of appropriate arrangements for food and refreshments
 - **During:**
 - A meet and greet, ensuring that all staff and/or volunteers are fully briefed on the activities and arrangements
 - Effective communication with the teacher in charge so they understand the plan for the day, providing paper copies of any paperwork submitted beforehand
 - All sessions delivered on time
 - Opportunities to gather feedback and evaluation during or at the end of the activities. Museums should request constructive feedback, asking what was great, what can be done better or be improved upon.
 - **Post-visit:**
 - Resources for follow up activities, such as a quiz for teachers to use to demonstrate the learning that took place
 - A thank you. Schools should be thanked for their visit and asked for their feedback.

- Follow up communications with additional timely, personal marketing and linked activities

Marketing and communications:

An organisation's website is one of the main ways that teachers decide on external visits. They carry out most of their research outside of school or office hours so require clear and concise information in order to make decisions. Where possible the following should be available on the website:

- A clear offer linked to the curriculum with learning outcomes and activity description
- Timings
- Prices
- Risk assessments, including safeguarding
- A schedule for the day detailing the timings of activities and movements of pupils. Specify within this where pupils will eat their lunch i.e. 'classroom available for lunch' so that teachers know there is a place for them to sit and eat.
- Lesson or visit resource examples
- Online booking or enquiry form

According to the findings of the audit preferred communication by teachers is via email, although printed brochures with the right content can have an impact in some cases. When communicating with schools museums should consider the following:

- Ensure regular communication, ideally every half term
- Include resources or ideas which are concise and to the point
- Make it topical or themed based on the time of year, current collection or a date in history
- Include time limited special offers based on a specific activity or exhibition

- Take the time to research target schools and build a database, ideally with individual teacher email addresses and contact names. Museums should ensure they comply with new [General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\)](#) now and in the future.
- Ensure communications look professional, attractive and are appropriate for the Key Stages

Museums should invest time into building networks. Word of mouth and relationship building is an important way to maintain regular school visits. Museums should consider attending meetings, such as LCEP meetings, and conferences to network with teachers, or invite them to visit the museum and provide further consultation opportunities.

Maintaining communication with teachers or schools who have previously visited is important. Museums should ask teachers they currently work with to recommend them and consider offering an incentive.

Recommendations for a support and development programme for museums

- A series of training sessions including:
 - New curriculum and designing interactive activity
 - Fundraising
 - Marketing and communication
- Regular network meetings for sharing practice



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Great Art and Culture for Everyone