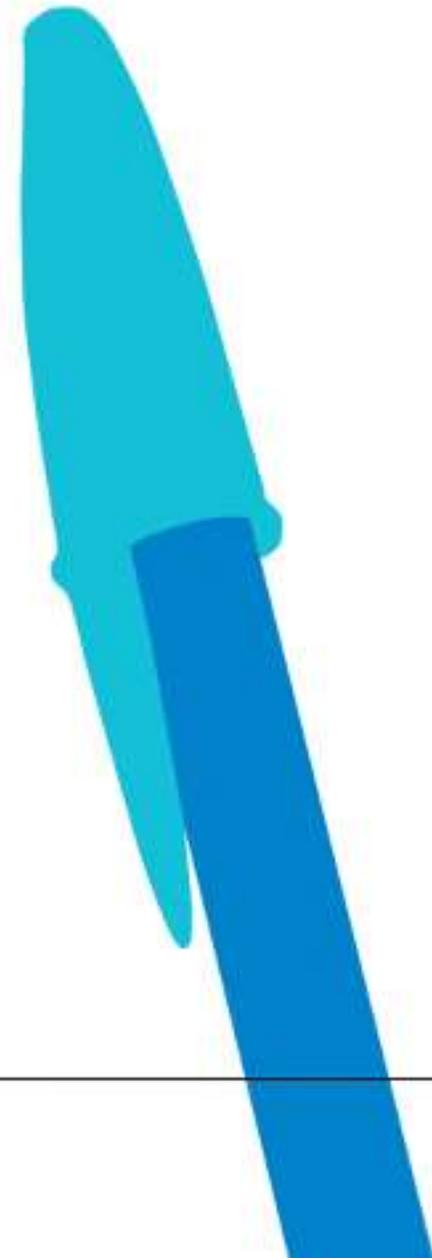


School trips to museums: forum report



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Executive summary

Museums report a decline in visitor numbers from schools and so they need to make sure that their offerings are more relevant to school needs than ever. The past seven years have seen unprecedented change in schools, with system, curriculum, qualification and accountability reform being accompanied by real-terms decline in budgets, increasing numbers of students, staff workload issues and teacher shortages.

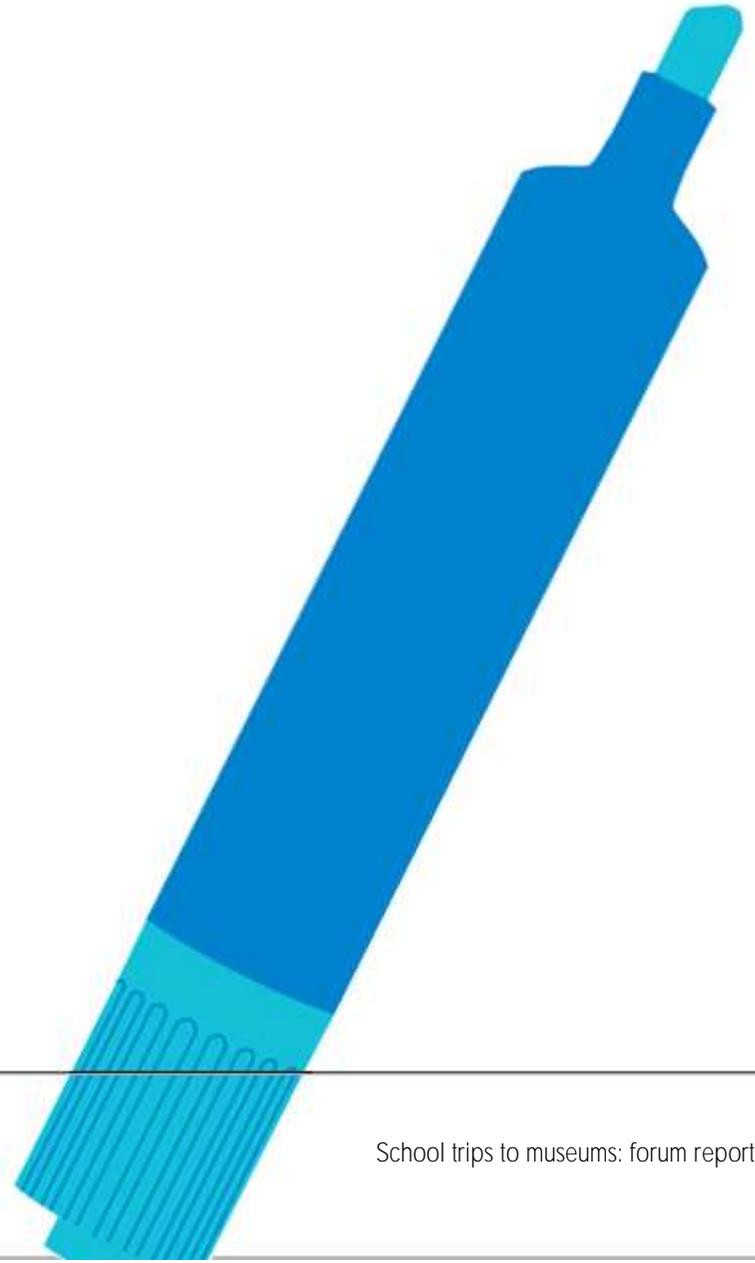
So it's not surprising if teachers are under too much pressure to take trips.

But schools have the same ambitions for school trips as they always have – motivations do not seem to have suffered as a result of the changes, it's mainly that the barriers have increased.

In order to justify a trip to a museum, schools feel they need to have some kind of curriculum focus, but it's generally the trip itself that carries the interest. Primary and lower secondary teachers don't seem to expect much in the way of actual learning to take place – engagement is the key element. At GCSE and A-level the curriculum focus needs to be tight.

Museums' main assets are the staff, for it's they who make the experience fulfilling or not. Good organisation at the museum end comes across strongly in this research as an essential ingredient for success and this is possibly more important as a staff skill than any other.

The wow factor is also a key element for a school trip: museums need to offer something that can't be achieved in school, or where the museum environment



provides the context for enrichment. Organising (and paying for) a school trip is a big commitment for schools and teachers need to feel that it's worth it. Often, the wow factor may be from seeing something that adds veracity or a real-life context to learning. Historical artefacts are the obvious example, but something that makes maths more tangible (for example) would also be very welcome.

A third essential ingredient is variety – teachers want lots to do on the day: they like workshops, but these should be part of a mix. There's scope for less relevant aspects (like dressing up or team-building games) and certainly for KS1-3, the pressure is less to teach than to engage, so there's room for plenty of creativity. Teachers tend to speak highly of days out where the children had lots of fun things to do more often than about how much they learned.

Less important are the museum's facilities, but, at the same time these are all very important! That is, they aren't likely to be a differentiator or attraction, but if they aren't right, they can certainly put teachers off wanting to come back. Primary schools in particular need somewhere to gather as a class away from other schools, where the teacher can address them easily. Teachers check these facilities online when considering where to take a trip, so websites need to provide reassurance that they're up to scratch.

Curriculum-based resources aren't as important as deciding factors as might be imagined, but teachers may use them to appraise the content of workshops, etc, or as a stimulus to develop their own activities. However, when they are particularly good they add a lot of value to the trip. On the whole though, these resources need a lot of careful thinking – they probably aren't going to be of comparable quality to those created by publishers, so the quality needs to come from the way they support and enhance the visit – especially by contributing to engagement.

While some museums clearly have a particular curriculum focus, they need to evaluate whether this is a strong selling point or not. For example a focus on the Tudors will go down well at the time of year when that topic is being taught, but at the end of the year, when more trips take place, schools may prefer to visit somewhere that covers several periods of history covered during the year. Alternatively, a museum with a very narrow focus (eg a prisoner of war camp) may find that broadening the appeal pays off (eg to cover wider aspects of WW2).

Secondary teachers are more likely to have more subject-specific needs than primary, but it's more difficult to predict what the curriculum covers. For example, the Cornerstones curriculum is finding some purchase in West Midlands primary schools. This could be a positive as it's project-based, allowing for greater cross-curricular relevance.

Meanwhile at secondary, the KS3 curriculum is virtually non-existent and it's probably better to use the GCSE specs as better starting points and working backwards. At KS4 and 5, offerings need to be spec-specific and across the secondary phase, cross-curricular approaches are less appealing.

The best way to push communications with teachers is via email, so marketing efforts should focus on this medium. However, it's the website that is main interface between museums and schools. The key aspects are that they should convey what the children will get from a visit, what the teacher can expect in practical terms and, perhaps most importantly of all, be well indexed on Google, because that's where teachers look first.

We look at the barriers to taking some trips in some detail in the final chapter of this report. These are mostly external influences which museums may need to aware of, rather than necessarily be able to do much about.



School priorities when deciding where to go on a school trip

Curriculum relevance continues to be the main motivator, since schools need to be able to justify the trip on educational grounds, even if the actual learning isn't the most important element, when all said and done.

Teachers also want the experience to be something they can't offer themselves: the ability to interact with objects and experts being the main motivators.

"Interactive workshops or activities delivered by staff who are good with children."

The venue itself needs to be a draw, too, otherwise schools may prefer museum staff to visit the school, or to use virtual tours or videos. That means that it needs to have the appropriate facilities and arrangements in place, with museum staff taking the visit seriously.

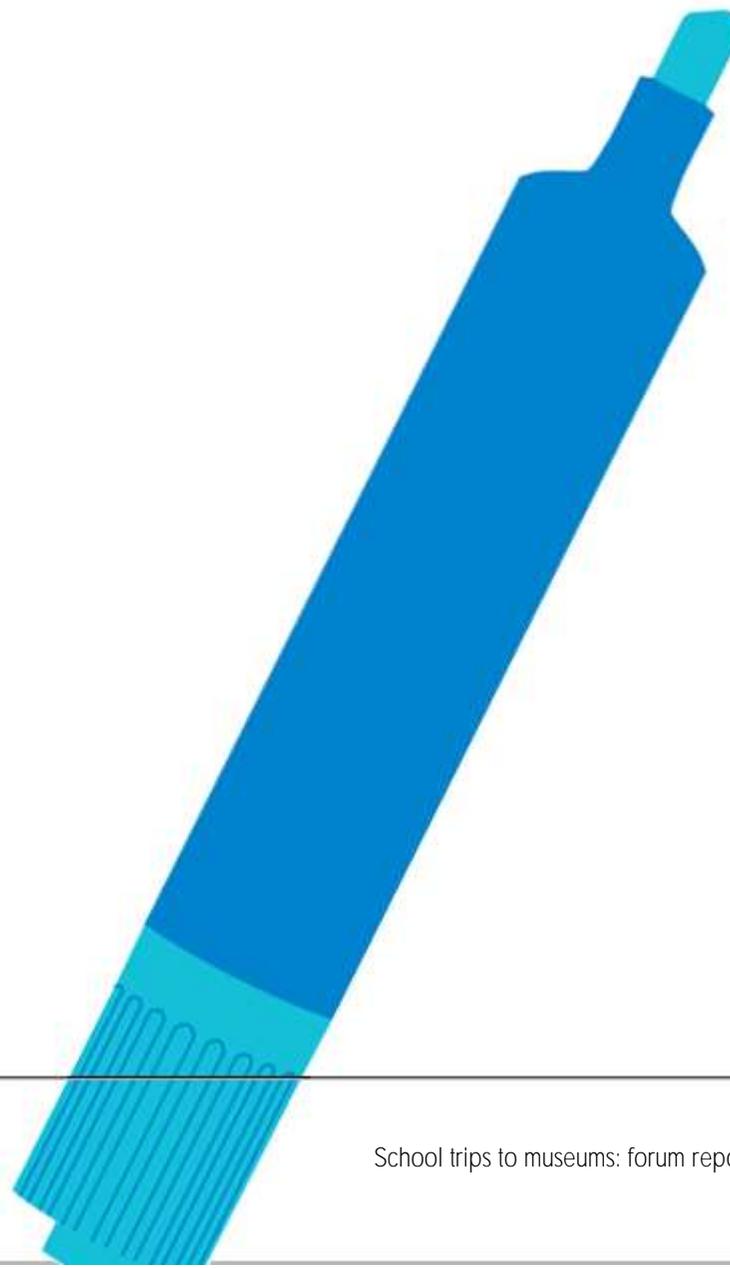
"Venues we have visited that are set up well for school parties set themselves apart from places which just seem to tolerate school groups."

Other considerations mentioned by several teachers include:

- Access
- Age appropriateness
- Cost
- Distance
- Facilities, eg space for lunch
- Parking
- Staffing

In general, the practicalities of the visit are perhaps more important than might be imagined:

"for the age of children I teach we always think about space and how safe they will be - can we pen them in or are there places they might be able to 'escape'."



What makes a museum trip a success?

Organisation

In following this discussion, we can see that teachers very often come back to the theme of organisation. It's clearly not *why* they would bring a school trip to a museum, but where the museum gets it wrong, it can be very off-putting. It's a stressful job, being in charge of a class of children in an out-of-school environment and the trip itself is just the culmination of a long-winded process, so teachers need the experience to be a good one.

"It was very well timetabled and school staff were completely informed about the agenda before and during the visit."

Good organisation, in this context, seems to be largely related to efficient and supportive museum staff, who take the burden off teachers on the day and who know how to work with children. Effective museum staff input was a theme returned to, in one form or another, many times during the research, whether in the context of staff expertise, or here, in the context of good organisation. This starts with the welcome and in setting up the experience, directing children and keeping up the sense of purpose.

"Obviously when dealing with large groups, students need information quickly and waiting around will only deter from the experience, and maybe result in undue tension and stress... Teachers really want quite a stress free experience and not feel like they are just barking orders every 5 minutes."

Teachers focus much more on the organisation on the ground, rather than the preparation: the latter being something of a chore, perhaps, but the actual visit

being where things can go wrong. They want to enjoy the visit themselves: most take trips because they enjoy the social interaction with the children in this less formal context, as well as to provide their class with an engaging experience. They need to feel that, while they retain overall control, the museum is doing the class management.

"The trip was relatively 'low maintenance' for the teachers, which always helps."

Experience

Interests:

For primary pupils, the engagement with activities is clearly the main motivator. Trips are generally arranged with a curriculum focus (see below), though there may be more than one focus, but the main thing is to engage the children in ways they tend not to be engaged at school. These aren't always necessarily the most directly relevant or the most difficult for schools to achieve themselves. For example, children love dressing up at a museum: they could equally do this at school, but tend not to because it's not so relevant as in a museum and the museum can have one (class) set of outfits that gets used repeatedly, while schools may only use it once a year.

"Interactive exhibits e.g. dressing up... a workshop where children get the chance to handle and examine artefacts with a member of staff from the museum."

Probably, the school hasn't come to the museum *in order* to dress up (or whatever): it's the engagement with the theme that adds so much value. Doing such activities under the direction of a knowledgeable member of museum staff also, clearly,

makes them worthwhile, as they provide the context and ensure that the children associate the activity with the theme of the visit.

Interactivity in any form is obviously a key attraction, particularly in areas which are sometimes difficult to make seem real in school. However, museums' collections aren't usually curated with children as the main audience, so interactive activities are needed to help engage children with the relevant content.

"Activities that are interactive and are leading towards the exhibits you want them to see."

Some creativity is obviously required here, again relying on the skills and experience of the museum staff. Teachers recommend that museums consult with local teachers to ensure that the activities are relevant and perhaps they could also be more engaged in the design of learning experiences. While teachers are pushed for time, they are often willing to give it up in return for participation in stimulating experiences, such as development workshops (perhaps in the summer holidays?), provided these are stimulating and engaging – teachers enjoy networking.

"Learning about children in the past always appeals to our pupils."

For secondary schools, the general pointers about engagement still apply, though there is obviously a greater need to focus on the learning. At KS3, this can be quite loose, but at KS4 upwards, ideally any leaning should make direct reference to the courses being followed – see below.

It's worth remembering though that, while it seems to be increasingly difficult to get children out of schools on trips, many teachers like to do so simply for their own sake and that the overall experience is the main criterion for evaluation (and repeat business), rather than, necessarily, the curriculum-related learning, that's important.

"The main aim is to try and get the students to develop a love of visiting museums and make them intrigued to come back in the future."

Variety:

One teacher, speaking about one of his favourite museums noted:

"There's a variety of things to see and do not just [the main theme of the museum]....It is the variety and the ability to touch that seems to work best."

During a museum visit, the class experiences a much longer learning experience than in school, where the typical duration is only about 30 minutes of actual learning time on any one subject area (less lower down and with more extended periods in secondary), so a half day in a museum requires a range of activities.

These need not all be directly related to the museum collections: many diversify for their schools offering, so that if the museum itself focuses on a theme with a fairly niche relationship to the curriculum, their schools offering acknowledges that the curriculum focus is elsewhere:

"Eden Camp, North Yorkshire. This former WW2 prisoner of war camp is now an exhibit to all things WW2."

Similarly, trips often take place at a time of year when the barriers to taking children out of school are lowest, such as after SATs or GCSEs are over, rather than when they would best fit the curriculum, so a range of activities, touching on several aspects of the curriculum can be attractive.

"The museum has a range of exhibits that support my topics, from an interactive floor where children can explore Victorian homes to ancient Greek artefacts."

This variety need not necessitate an expansion of the actual collection itself: reproduction items such as posters, reprinted texts or resources that simply help with the engagement all add to the experience. Different resources engage different children, of course, so again, the broader the range of options, the better.

Authenticity:

"The whole set is set to represent what it would have looked like in the 1940s. Students really feel as though they are 'stepping back in time'. The atmosphere is spot-on, from the many military vehicles dotted around the site to the authentic smells and sights as you walk through the aftermath of an air raid."

In the history context, schools really appreciate museums' ability to help students empathise with the period being studied, but the same also applies to contextualising learning in other subjects, such as maths, to real life. They also want to bring in external influences, to help authenticate their teaching, so that children appreciate that the knowledge and skills aren't just "because the teacher says so". Schools find this a challenge in all subject areas, whereas for museums, this is an essential part of the remit.

"Going to his actual house made him seem a like a real person who had once been alive, not just a name."

Extras:

It's often the little things that make a difference – again, not necessarily the reasons for taking a trip, but which help contribute to the feeling that a trip has been a pleasurable experience for both children and accompanying adults. This might take the form of providing free coffee, unusual experiences, easy parking, a nice gift shop, or some small value-added item that has nothing to do with learning.

"They even took photographs of the children in costume and provided the parents with a copy of the photo (at an additional cost). What a great idea! Then the children have a lasting memory of the day."

Staff

"The tour is well-staffed with informative guides and brilliant presentations."

Staff are a museum's best asset, as far as school trips are concerned. They may be the reason for taking a trip – perhaps have expertise in a particular area, so enriching and extending learning – perhaps being good with children, making the teacher more relaxed – or in being well organised, as described above.

In the context of secondary education and particularly at exam level, good subject knowledge is essential, alongside all the other aspects, so is more difficult to achieve, especially for smaller museums.

"Very well prepared staff planned and led the whole visit from start to finish. They were highly skilled and knowledgeable."

Staff also need to be flexible in their response to school needs, as teachers often need something tailored to their students. This also needs to be obvious in marketing materials – especially the website, though the flexibility needs to be based around a reassuring structure, so schools know what to expect.

"On many of our recent visits traffic and late arrival both to the venue and home are becoming a major issue... Flexibility from the museums would make a huge difference as many seem to book in a number of school visits on the same day."

Facilities and resources

Experienced trip organisers are very astute about the needs of their classes and they look at websites to see if they can identify the suitability of the venue, so this aspect needs to be very clearly signposted.

"A large meeting place away from general public is always good so you can speak with the students. This also goes for lunch."

For smaller museums, teachers need reassurance that there will be space enough for the teacher to address the whole class. For larger ones, schools like to have an area where they can for some of the time be separate from other schools.

"Its small size is ideal for a group our size (70-80 children) and as far as I know the museum only allows one group per day."



Most of this is to do with practicality and logistics, rather than educational needs, so teachers tend to talk about storage areas, toilets and lunch facilities more than they mention classroom and learning facilities.

"All our gear can be stored together in the classroom, the toilets are on the ground floor level and there are further toilets, eating areas and a gift shop."

In fact, teachers in the forum rarely mentioned the learning resources as being a marker for success, even though curriculum relevance is a top priority (see below).

"I love the fact that they are constantly updating their exhibitions and their schools packs are great."

Accessibility is also an important factor. As we see below, the cost of transport can be prohibitive, so local museums might be expected to benefit from the barrier this presents to visiting national museums – though the cost of hiring a coach, even locally can be prohibitive. Free entry is also a big plus.

"The main plus point about Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery is that it's free if you lead the visit yourself and it's accessible by public transport, meaning the children can enjoy a day out of school for minimal costs."

The accompanying survey report examines the importance of various aspects of museums' facilities – apart from the shop, all are important. Museums need to do all they can to get all aspects right. However, coming back to the often-repeated

importance of good organisation, it's likely that facilities which support this (such as class space) are likely to be, in practice, the most essential facility to get right.

What kinds of things tend to work well during museum trips?

Forum members were asked to suggest aspects of their experiences in response to this question – here are their suggestions verbatim: most have been discussed above.

Primary:

"Primary age children love being able to touch...dressing up, smelling, feeling, listening all help with engagement."

"Primary really need hands-on but very structured."

"If artefacts at the museum can be linked to children's lives they are more likely to be enthusiastic. E.g. squeezing into a Victorian chimney or sitting in an air raid shelter listening to 'bombs'."

"Sometimes just the height of displays can be difficult for younger children."

"In order to justify a trip out of school the exhibits/workshops must be curriculum relevant."

"Anything which provides a sense of wonder and bringing things to life."

"An attempt to re-create the historical atmosphere is always enjoyed e.g. our children loved a re-creation of a gory accident in a Victorian factory at the Thackray museum."

Secondary:

"It's all about engaging content... any time out of school needs to be justified to parents and other staff whose lessons the children are missing. The content needs to be something that cannot be done at school or accessed over the internet so practical sessions are really a must."

"I need my pupils coming away from any visit with an enhanced love for the topic...."

"Specialist 'classes' / lectures aimed at the pupils which are given once or twice a day by the staff"

"I like the idea of twilight visits - perhaps accompanied by a 30 minute lecture. Museums can offer the depth needed for GCSE+ work."

"Most importantly, there needs to be a very direct, specific link to the particular exam syllabus."

Museum staff:

"Having 'experts' to demonstrate or talk can be great if they are able to engage the children and speak at their level."

"Museums need highly trained staff who understand how children learn, and be able to cope with children with SEND."

"Children enjoy meeting people with a real passion but they need to be able to talk to the children at the right level."

"Structure and pace is very important in activities and the member of staff leading it should be aware of these factors."

"We've met some excellent staff who really lived their roles as miners, servants or school teachers; less often fortunately, we've also experienced staff who clearly had had enough of school children and were dismissive or unfriendly. So having staff who are enthusiastic, well informed and willing to engage with the children is definitely a factor in ensuring return visits."

Resources:

"When children have a large exhibition to wander round they can easily lose interest so worksheets/ question sheets or trails with things to look for can be useful. It helps if accompanying adults know how to help with these too, so copies in advance would be helpful."

"Museums need to provide materials and resources that children can get their hands on."

"If you're a smaller venue, could tailoring your schools provision to more specialised groups be the best way forwards? Revision sessions for relevant GCSE/A-Levels, perhaps?"

Subject focuses

In general, teachers seem to be interested in “traditional” subject areas, though maths activities received a lot of attention:

“Maths ‘in the real world’ would be amazing. We’d bite your hand off!”

Several primary teachers agreed with this preference. Maths in the primary curriculum has become more challenging, both in terms of difficulty and by the introduction of more problem-solving approaches. Primary teachers face new challenges to engage children as a result, so would welcome any support that museums could give.

Teachers’ previous experiences with maths delivered by cross-curricular approaches tend not to be positive and schools often exclude maths from creative curriculum topics. So museums wishing to develop new resources should take care to get this right, for example by working with maths teachers or their local maths hub.

“Any input from teachers is valuable but of course, the ideas need to be as timeless as possible and not date too quickly.”

Other suggestions included:

- Egyptians, Greeks – in the North
- Prehistoric Britain
- Victorians
- WW2
- 19th Century homes

- Early Years and KS1 transport
- Y2 and Y5 space topics
- Poetry and creative writing
- Hands on science
- Rocks/minerals and dinosaurs
- More STEM based activities

Cross-curricular approaches:

"Most of our museum trips are to support history, however I'm finding an increasing amount of activities on offer to support other curriculum areas too. Cross-curricular workshops are also becoming more prominent too which is great."

"I think if you do your research carefully, you can cover many aspects of the curriculum at one location and museum staff often have good suggestions we may not have considered."

While many primary teachers prefer the cross-curricular approach, many schools are returning to more subject-specific one and it seems wise for museums to offer either alternative, where possible. The Cornerstones Curriculum is a good example of a project-based approach that might be a good starting point for cross-curricular topics: <https://cornerstoneseducation.co.uk/products/curriculum/cornerstones-curriculum-england/>

Cross-curricular approaches for museums are also likely to make primary school trips easier to justify, as the coverage could be wider. This applies even in primary schools where the formal curriculum is more subject-specific.

"Our preference would definitely be cross curricular and this also helps promotion of the trip benefits to parents, thus getting maximum participants!"

The response to STEM-based extra-curricular approaches seems to suggest that these would be popular: *"a STEM based trip might be more 'sellable' to SLT"*, one teacher said.

Some secondary teachers also see the benefits to cross-curricular approaches:

"There should be options to extend the learning across a series of cross-curriculum themes, including: history, science, art and geography."

One secondary teacher even went as far as to say:

"Cross-curricular visits are probably the future of school visits. With school budgets getting ever tighter, there's quite a case for subjects clubbing together and sharing visits. We've done this in the past with a joint RE-History visit to Fountains Abbey and a Drama-History trip to Greece."

However, it's not clear whether this would be more generally the case at secondary level.

How can museums get teachers' attention?

This is not an easy question to answer as making the first contact is the most difficult step.

"Often when we receive mail shots or emails they are overlooked."

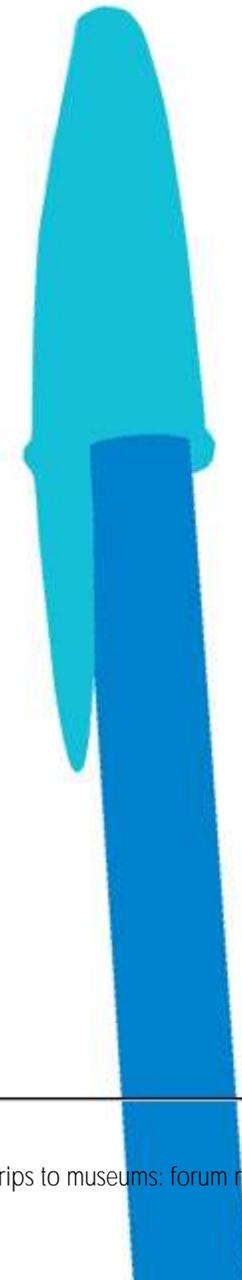
"There are too many junk fliers and random emails so these are just thrown away or deleted."

Email and social media are likely to continue to represent the best means of communicating with teachers, as we find in all the marketing research we carry out for clients across the education spectrum, so the trick is to find offerings and messages that work. Smaller museums in particular may not have dedicated marketing expertise, but technology allows them to monitor the success of campaigns via links clicked, numbers of Twitter followers etc.

However, making the offering compelling in the first place is the most important and this will involve talking to local schools about their needs. Museums continue to be exotic and interesting places for teachers, and they could perhaps investigate providing more engaging opportunities for teachers to network there - perhaps offering the venue for existing teacher networks, laying on refreshments for free.

"A visit from a curator into schools with hands on exhibits or taster sessions would be great."

"Have an open day/evening for educational visits coordinators..."



"Where teachers could ...view the activities available for students."

If previous open evenings and teach-meets have not been well attended, schools will need to be consulted about how the offering, or the marketing of it, could be improved. Teachers seem to think these are good ideas - they just need to be engaged with them. And of course to be able to find the time.

"Invite pupils along to get their reactions and then make any improvements."

Another approach which seemed popular among these teachers was the idea of giving free access to teachers and their families during holidays or at weekends:

"I find that when I am sent a free ticket for myself and the family, that I attend in the holidays to check the venues out."

"I'd be much more likely to go on a museum trip with somewhere I've already "test run" with my own family."

"Free or half priced tickets or even a money off offer to all local teachers to go in the holidays with their family and friends would be good advertising and would make me consider somewhere I might not have thought of otherwise."

Other ideas suggested included:

"Offering CPD in the museum's area of expertise might be beneficial, as would looking into teach meets or local network meetings or conferences to see if you could speak or set up a stall."

"Museum stand at the School Open Evenings - this raises the museum profile and puts it at the heart of the school community."

"A 'taster' session held in school."

"What about offering pupils an opportunity to volunteer at the museum, under the guidance of a CRB checked adult? Our local entertainment venue offers pupils the opportunity to critique bands and concerts (with free tickets for attendance) and they have loved having what is quite an adult experience. Pupils could become experts in a particular aspect of the museum-so many opportunities here."

"A list of all programmes running in the next two years if possible so teachers can link the visits to their long term planning"

Museum websites

As in most aspects of life, the internet has become the first port of call for finding out about museums, so once they have developed a good offering for schools, museums need to make information about and to support it available online. Websites can't afford to be burdened with poor navigation or a clumsy or dated presentation and they need to be found by search engines: many teachers will use Google instead of going straight to websites they are already familiar with, because they expect Google's search to be better than the site's own.

"It is a simple fact that web-sites are the first (and only) way schools seek out local museums now."



"The internet is the first call as using a search engine to find places to visit that covers the correct area we are studying makes a big difference when encouraging us to change venues."

Websites have to find the balance between being a marketing tool and providing the right information in an accessible way. Those supporting schools trips should probably also be easily accessible via mobile phone too, so that teachers can use them on the coach or at the venue.

Teachers, especially primary teachers, have little time to use websites during the school day and so they need to find what they need fast. They have even less time to make phone calls, so online booking and supportive information can be very important.

"The website should be easily accessed with all the core information - timings / location / pricing - out front. To get the schools switched on to the web-sites, it might need a [museums] educational officer to visit the schools to get them up to speed on the local museum's offer."

"Being able to make bookings via the website is a great help for busy teachers. It can be done anytime, even at home in the evening which is probably when I would find the time."

"I also appreciate anything that can be done online-time for telephone conversations can be scarce in the teaching day."

Teaching and learning resources aren't much mentioned specifically by teachers in the context of website availability: they can be useful in helping to give an impression of the activity and experience that the museum will provide, but they seem to be less important to teachers than might be imagined. Museums should think carefully about priorities, here: it may be more beneficial to concentrate on demonstrating the quality of the visit experience than in preparing worksheets and other resources. Where such resources are available, teachers appreciate being able to find them easily.

"If pre or post visit resources were made available to print that would probably save the museum money and help teachers to prepare too. Being able to download the museum's risk assessment to add to the visit paperwork would be very useful too."

"Something to whet the pupils' appetite would be great. How about a video produced by pupils who have visited the museum?"

"Clear links are needed to all key resources such as activity packs for the pupils, generic risk assessment, map of the site/building for planning itinerary, prices, facilities etc."

Again, support with the practicalities is important and teachers make several suggestions throughout this phase of the consultation as to how this might be provided.

"Any generic risk assessments that can be adapted for an individual school would be welcome."



"Clear pricing and information is a big plus for me. I'm less likely to send an enquiry form unless the basics are already obvious (eg prices, provided facilities, somewhere for lunch, any details of prices and any extra costs.) Oh and a map!"

"There should be a designated contact who responds to enquiries promptly - teachers have so much to do in school time that ringing up and pursuing enquiries becomes very difficult."

"Also a page for tips from other teachers who have visited would be a nice idea to share site specific recommendations."

The survey report gives some other suggestions about resources and other items of interest to teachers that might be found online.

Museums' websites are their most important tool in engaging teachers - ideally, they should:

- be found by Google, using appropriate search terms
- work well on mobile phones
- convey the schools offering in an engaging manner, showing what pupils and teachers will get out of a visit
- give clear information about all the practicalities, in a way which makes them easy to find
- provide reassurances that the promises made will be kept - perhaps via convincing testimonials
- help schools get the most out of their visit

Reasons for a decline in school trips to museums

"I'm not sure if this is a general trend or specific to our school but we tend to go on less trips than in the past due to a range of factors, money, time, effort, parents etc and perhaps the museum-type trips sometimes seem like nice but less necessary than say outdoor education centres, residentials, castle visits etc."

While the forum didn't explore the effect, it seems likely that competition from the "team-building" type of activity might have a part to play in the decline in museum visits. In a separate study conducted by Schoolzone earlier this year, when we asked about trips in general, responses were dominated by those from visits to outdoor education and overseas trips. See also the accompanying survey report.

Budgets:

This is the worst period for school funding in recent times, with annual budgets falling by about 8% in real terms (according to several sources, including the NAO), but it's not just the cost of the trip itself that's the barrier, but the impact on morale, workload, staffing levels, curriculum time and so on. Across the education supply industry, everyone seems to be feeling the same effect.

Staffing is the main pressure, as this has an impact on delivery of the curriculum across the school, if teachers are taken out of the classroom. Supply cover is expensive and schools are less likely to ask colleagues to cover absences in the current environment of high teacher workloads.

"Budgetary but I think more to do with the cost of covering staff out of school rather than the cost of the trip itself."



"As a primary school, we often have to allow for ratios of between 1:6 and 1:10. We do take parents where we can, but even a single class trip has to have two members of staff."

Transport is also a very big consideration, even for local museums (see survey report):

"Transport costs are certainly the major issue."

"A return visit to our nearest town will cost at least £250, which for a class of 30 is about £8 per head just for a bus."

Schools seem to look elsewhere for cheaper alternatives, as they are having to do across the board, in the current financial climate.

"Sometimes it is simply more practical to show a film or have a virtual tour of a museum in the classroom. This is nowhere near the same experience, but sometimes it is the only option."

Contributions:

"We also have had an increasing number of parents who have been unable to provide a contribution to the cost of the trip and had to unfortunately cancel the trip."

Schools often request parental contributions to cover extra-curricular activities such as trips, but parents are also feeling the effects of austerity and when schools do not achieve sufficient contributions they may well cancel the trip, or avoid the issue at all, by using alternatives. Teachers had a lot to say on this issue. Some examples:

"Parents aren't always willing or able to help cover the costs. Finding having visitors into school with artefacts more cost effective."

"It can be difficult to justify the cost of a trip to parents unless there is something really special going on. With the internet, we can have access to video, decent realistic pictures etc and there are even beginning to be VR opportunities, all of which can take place in school."

"The cost of the transport, coupled with the entry fee, meant that the day trip would have cost students around £25-£30. For me, I think asking students to contribute such a high amount for a trip to a local museum is too much to ask."

"It is always difficult to balance the cost of a visit to parents with the benefits to children. Well off families are often able to take their children to visit events/sites/museums that fit with the class topic in the holidays or weekends. The least well off have the trips paid for by the school. That leaves those struggling in the middle who can't really afford to go themselves or pay for a school trip."

"It's very hard to quantify what value the children get from it."

"Parents of several children are often paying for all sorts of things and there's always a limit."

Pupil Premium:

This funding is given to schools on the basis of a fixed amount per pupil who is in receipt of free school meals. It's meant to give extra funding to schools with higher proportions of socially disadvantaged children and schools often set some of it aside to provide direct support to help parents who can't afford to make voluntary contributions. However, even this appears to be being spread more thinly.

"Every child on PP has all trips paid for by the school. We haven't historically added in the cost of staffing for trips but with budgets tightening we will have to in future."

"Our PP funding goes towards the bigger trips abroad rather than local trips as I think going abroad is seen as less accessible to those pupils."

"Pupil premium funding ... has reduced a lot in the last few years. We are in a very deprived area but a lot of our parents are now on ... other benefits and the children are not eligible for pupil premium. As an infant school they are not signing up for free school meals as they get lunches provided anyway. So that funding is not what it used to be."

The survey shows that PP funding tends to be spent only on subsidising trips for children who attract the funding, rather than being spread across all pupils.

Curriculum change:

Schools are under ever-increasing pressure from accountability measures, including Ofsted, EBacc, progress measures, the threat of being labelled coasting, SATs and GCSE performance, destination measures and so on. Most of these force schools to focus on English and Maths at the expense of other subjects and in these two subjects, to focus on exam preparation more than they have had to previously.

"SLT will sometimes veto the trip on the grounds of cover implications / timeout of class."

"Time constraints in an ever demanding curriculum."

"Some schools have policies that specifically ban any trips for exam groups during the lead up to their papers."

The National Curriculum has changed and all GCSE subjects and most A-levels are in the process of reform, which also puts pressure on teachers to focus heavily on curriculum relevance. In some cases the curriculum seems to have changed in ways which suggest fewer opportunities for museums.

The National Curriculum has become much looser, so that where in previous years, museums could find specific themes and topics to base experiences on, now there is much less specificity and schools adopt a wide range of approaches (eg see WW2 references below). There are some alternatives gaining ground which might be worth museums paying attention to:

"As the curriculum changed so much a few years ago there's not as much opportunity to link it in with the EYFS and KS1. Most of the schools in Tamworth also follow the Cornerstones curriculum plan which suggests 'memorable experiences'."

GCSE history has changed so that schools look in more detail at certain themes, but their options are wider, so it's worth museums finding out what their local schools are doing and trying to find common ground – there may be a local history teachers' network for example, which may welcome a local museum's involvement.

"Perhaps museums need to work / consult closely with local schools / curriculums to see what they can offer that will both benefit and draw in schools."

However, it does seem that the pressure to deliver school improvement – and this has been increased by each successive education secretary – is a major barrier to taking children out of school.

"Staff do not want to release students from lessons when the visit is not from their subject. How about offering twilight sessions which students could be brought to by parents?"

"It is very difficult to get trips for KS4 and KS5 students approved as schools don't want their exam groups to be out of school. There are also costs with covering lessons, which schools have to cover out of their central budget. We work around this by running trips across weekends when we go abroad and by fitting trips into bank holidays or training days when it's a day trip. For example, we take our Y12 students to visit Hadrian's Wall on one of the bank holidays in May. However, all of

this only happens because of the goodwill of staff who have to give up their own time to allow the trip to take place."

School trips aren't organised by "schools" of course, they're organised by individual teachers who have an enthusiasm for doing so. All the above are putting pressure on individuals and if they are feeling the strain, they have less energy, time and capacity to do less essential activity.

"With so much added pressure from so many different sources, perhaps teachers are less likely to volunteer to organise trips and take on the extra burden as they have been in the past."

Bad experiences:

The combination of factors alluded to above all seem to conspire towards making teachers less likely to want or be able to take trips to museums, so it's more important than ever that museums make the whole process as easy as possible. Health and Safety regulations and increasing culture of litigation may also be factors.

"I know for a fact some staff are put off by the administrative side of organising even a small trip. A museum visit requires a risk assessment and some teachers do not like to go through this process."

"The administrative side of organising a trip can be tiresome too, and more and more seems to be required each time a visit is planned."

Just as good museum staff members can enrich a visit, poor ones can put schools off returning. This is a very sensitive area, especially where museums have to rely on volunteer staff. Teachers are less likely to voice their disappointments than they would be elsewhere, and simply vote with their feet, so museums with any concerns in this regard need to find ways of quality assuring this aspect of their schools offering and taking appropriate action.

"By their nature, museums and monuments are sometimes staffed by enthusiastic volunteers. Unfortunately, these are not always the best people to build a rapport and engage with students. I appreciate this is a very delicate issue for venues, but I have witnessed toe-curlingly bad examples which do nothing but put students off, which has a knock on effect when decided whether to run it again when there are so many other issues (costs!) to have to work around, too."

Some of these barriers are beyond museums' ability to address directly, such as funding, or pressure to perform, and so their focus should be on the *teacher*: what can museums do that will attract those teachers who are in a position to get their children out of school and who have enthusiasm to do so?

Museums are too far removed from teachers' day to day influences to be able to engender that enthusiasm easily, but engaging activities, such as laying on holiday offerings for them and their families, seems a good way to at least capture their attention. The focus should be on engagement rather than education – teachers will be able to see the potential themselves, and may well prefer to do so, rather than be told about how the museum supports learning.

But, the pressure that teachers are under nowadays will continue to mean that they have precious little time and capacity to do much more than deliver the curriculum in traditional ways, so museums probably need to accept that successes may start small.

The logo for Schoolzone features the word "schoolzone" in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The word "school" is in black, and "zone" is in yellow. The text is centered within a white rectangular area that is framed by a thick yellow border. The border consists of four thick yellow bars: one at the top, one at the bottom, one on the left, and one on the right, meeting at the corners.

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The logo for the British Educational Suppliers Association (besa) features the word "besa" in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized orange checkmark icon. Below the text and icon, the full name "BRITISH EDUCATIONAL SUPPLIERS ASSOCIATION" is written in a smaller, uppercase, sans-serif font.

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The logo for MRS Evidence Matters features a circular arrangement of small, multi-colored dots (red, black, white, and grey) forming a ring. Inside the ring, the letters "MRS" are written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. To the right of the ring, the words "Evidence Matters" are written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font, with "Evidence" on the top line and "Matters" on the bottom line. Below this, the text "Company Partner" is written in an even smaller, black, sans-serif font.

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