



National
Guidance

Heritage visits

Rationale

For the purpose of this guidance, heritage visits are those focussed on visiting sites of historical interest such as castles, historic or architecturally interesting buildings, monuments, canals, old industrial sites, sacred spaces, battle sites, concentration camps. Such experiences can enhance the understanding of a young person's heritage, or the heritage of others. They may also be the focus of re-enactments that bring historical events to life in a unique and memorable way.

Special Features and Learning Outcomes

Heritage visits provide the following learning opportunities:

- Possible access to professional staff who can act as guides for visitors to the site. This can provide added value to the young people's learning.
- curiosity and creativity – whether through seeing, touching, hearing or feeling, a young person visiting a heritage site is exposed to real world learning, which may raise questions, stimulate thought and bring academic study to life.
- a new and possibly very different study environment – young people are able to challenge their preconceptions and think in new ways.
- exploring culture and identity – heritage sites tell us about our past and provide a valuable route to understanding cultural diversity and our own place in the world.
- easy access to other experiential learning opportunities – heritage sites often provide other learning facilities such as museums and galleries.

Range of Provision

Visit Leaders may choose to run the learning activity without reference to professional guides, or by using the site's guides, or a combination of the two. Whatever the choice, it is important that there is clear understanding by all parties of how the duty of care for the safety and wellbeing of the young people is to be exercised at any given time.

Some heritage sites are run by local authorities and deliver learning programmes as part of their Heritage Services.

Some heritage organisations run learning projects, often focusing on the local environment. These projects partner schools or their equivalents with specific sites for the development of progressive learning programmes.

There are also short programmes or one-off events that enable free or unrestricted access to some sites e.g. Heritage Open Days.

Safety Considerations

Some heritage sites incorporate hazards that will require careful risk management. In particular, medieval castles often have features such as open (and sometimes broken) embrasures overlooking long drops, unguarded access to open and deep-water moats and steep but relatively unprotected staircases, which, in other settings, would automatically put leaders on a higher level of alert and vigilance. These features also heighten the curiosity level of young people and are what make such places interesting and exciting. Visit Leaders must put in place appropriate control measures relating to group management, ensuring they meet the specific needs of the group they are planning to take.

Sites may provide their own generic risk assessments. While Visit Leaders may find these helpful, they must **not** be treated as meeting **all** of the requirements for having a recorded risk-benefit assessment in place. For example, the site does not have appropriate knowledge of the group that will be visiting their site or the competence and experience of the leaders. The Visit Leader (and their team) should use the material provided as generic prompts on which to base their own site/event-specific risk-benefit assessment.

Quality Standards

Sites open to the public must meet legally required health and safety standards, and it is not necessary to seek assurances about these unless specific issues have been raised by the risk-benefit assessment.

Where a site is not open to the public (e.g. where special arrangements have been made to visit a closed site), then assurances about health and safety should be obtained.

Where a site holds a Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge, many employers will accept this as sufficient assurance of safety standards. Visit Leaders should check their employer's policy.

There are also quality accreditation schemes in place such as the Sandford Awards that accredit heritage sites for excellence in education provision. Large heritage bodies such as English Heritage and the National Trust also monitor standards in their education provision.

Learning Support Provision

Many heritage sites provide support to make a visit more useful:

- Specialist learning support staff – heritage sites often have dedicated learning and education officers who are trained to deliver learning activities and programmes that are focused to meet specific subjects and skills
- Interactive materials – some heritage sites can provide interactive materials e.g. allowing young people to dress in period costumes

- Web-based materials – many heritage sites have developed resources such as lesson plans, worksheets and activity ideas that are downloadable from their website. These websites often have interactive capacity and provide a stimulating way of accessing information about the site
- Pre-visit tours – these are often provided free of charge to potential Visit Leaders. They offer opportunities for Visit Leaders to become familiar with the site, offer opportunities to clarify risk-benefit assessment issues and provide material that can be used to prepare learners for their forthcoming visit
- Evaluation and planning – heritage site professionals are often experienced in providing planning support for a visit. They may be able to offer help with the evaluation of learners’ experiences after the visit
- Outreach – some heritage sites develop long-term relationships with schools and learners and provide support by visiting learners in their own establishment

