



LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM HERITAGE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

Case Study

HISTORIC HOUSE

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

Pepinburgh Hall was built in 1560, and is set in gardens and a wider estate. The house was remodelled in the eighteenth century so little of the original Tudor interior remains. Several rooms are on display, including the kitchen and other service areas. The Calcott family bought the house in the 1750s and still live there, opening the house and grounds to visitors on Sundays and Bank Holidays between Easter and October, and on two days a week during the summer term and September. Schools are welcomed during regular opening hours.

The owner employs a visitor services manager, a part-time curator, a part-time administrator, 10 part-time room stewards (3 or 4 on duty at one time) and two gardeners. There is a small group of volunteers who run the café at weekends, and carry out some house duties including room stewarding, object cleaning and other curatorial tasks.

The group visiting is a Year 6 class (Key Stage 2) with 26 pupils, aged 10-11 years, including one child who uses a wheelchair, and one child with moderate learning difficulties.

Description of Practice

Amy Webb, teacher of Year 6 at Athelstan Primary School, contacted us by e-mail. She wanted to bring her class as she had seen from our website that some rooms were displayed as they had been during

the 1930s. I posted Amy our leaflet for schools (1), to let her know what we could offer. It gives all the information teachers need, including opening times, brief information on the house, collections and grounds, location, public transport access and parking, where children can eat their lunch, photography guidelines, student : adult ratio and details of costs. The leaflet also lets teachers know that they should make a free planning visit (2). This is very important as most visits are teacher-led. We update the leaflet once a year; this is cheap to do as it is a simple sheet, and soon the information will be on our website as well. We make sure that all our staff and volunteers have the latest copy in their briefing pack so they can give up to date information if asked.

I enclosed our booking form (3) – we have developed this as a two-way process of sharing information between teachers and us about the planned visit. On the reverse, we have printed our evaluation form for teachers to see in advance. As we do not have an education officer, liaising with schools either falls to me, the curator or administrator. We have set up a system for recording all enquiries and then firm bookings so we all know what has been agreed (4). We take teachers' phone and e-mail details, and make sure we let them know when we will get back to them about their plans. We can then follow up their visit and get feedback (5) easily too.

On the booking form we ask for information about the planned visit – date (including a second choice, numbers, times etc. We also ask whether any students have special needs – either physical or learning needs (6). To us, the most useful part of the form is the section where we ask about why the teacher is bringing the group to us – what they hope to get out of the visit, what the children will learn and which skills they will develop (7). This visit was focusing on the 1930s, looking at how rich families lived and entertained and how the house was managed and run. Amy wanted to visit the service wing of the house, the main rooms, and the gardens.

Amy phoned to book a planning visit. As I was to be out that day, I made sure that the administrator was available (8). We keep a box file of information needed when teachers make their planning visits. It contains details of our Education Policy, our recycling guidelines, our public liability insurance, and other Health and Safety and Child Protection documentation . There are also copies of our property risk information sheet, to help teachers in preparing their risk assessment for their particular visit and planned activities (9).

We don't have a teachers' handbook, or worksheets for school groups, but we do have a summary sheet of ideas based on different activities that have worked well at our house (10). Last year a volunteer observed some classes at work. She wrote up a brief summary of each activity, including the age of the children, the learning objectives the teacher had identified, how children had been prepared, and what they did and produced back at school. We asked permission to share these with other schools, and included information from the teachers' feedback forms. (We were careful to choose those activities which teacher feedback had shown to meet the learning objectives.) So far this has been well received by teachers, and some of them have adapted the ideas for their own classes. We hope to develop this further into an interactive space on our website where teachers can share ideas and add their own comments and advice.

We also used this information as part of our training day for our room stewards and volunteers (11). It helps them support children's learning when they know what learning objectives and eventual outcomes are planned.

Amy Webb had brought her teaching assistant and a parent helper on her planning visit, and they had identified which areas of the house they needed to use. We made sure that the room steward on duty had a copy of their booking form too. He gave the teacher and helpers a brief tour, to help them introduce the house to their small groups of children on the visit. Amy Webb did not want the whole class to be given the standard guided tour, as she had set specific investigations for each group to carry out in the places she had selected (12).

The class was divided into three working groups, and after their familiarisation, got down to their separate tasks. These related to the main project, which was the planning of a weekend house party to take place in June 1934. The class had been told that, once back at school, they would be putting together the detail of the whole weekend, including making a guest list, designing invitations in 1930s style, planning a menu, hiring staff and drafting a programme of guest entertainment and activities for the weekend. **Each group was to collect information about a particular part of the house. As one child had to use a wheelchair, one group was allocated accessible areas to work in (13).**

Each group was given a prompt list of things to look for. **They recorded their information in various ways – drawing, recording using a small hand held digital recorder, writing, and digital photography - still and video (14).** They brought some equipment with them but **we also have a small stock of digital cameras and recorders to loan out if needed; feedback from teachers told us this that using this type of equipment was more engaging for some learners than just writing down answers (15).** One group recorded information from the current temporary display about the 1930s including photographs from Country Life, extracts from the account books and room inventories, and copies of menus. We were able to send the school some **photocopies of some of this material for their follow-up work (16).** Soon we hope to put some of this material onto our website.

The objectives for the visit included the development of skills of collaborative working, enquiry and problem solving. Although each small group of children was supervised at all times by their teacher or adult helper, the children took responsibility for the decisions about what to record and how to do it. **As they knew why they were gathering the information and what they were going to do with it back at school, this kept them focused (17).**

The class ate lunch in the covered picnic area in a barn, close to the service wing. We just about have enough space for a class there, and we usually can manage to allocate it to school groups during the weekdays we are open (at weekends it is in demand by families). **We have simple benches and tables, separate recycling bins for rubbish and lavatories are close by. Although it may sound very basic, we find that teachers appreciate the covered space, and that they can rely on its availability once they have booked (18).** As there was a sudden thunderstorm on the afternoon of this visit, the children were not able to go straight into the kitchen garden for their afternoon activity, so Amy Webb **used the barn as an impromptu classroom for half an hour, getting the groups to report back on their morning work and to ask questions (19).** They were then able to have a shorter session in the gardens before returning to school.

After the visit, our administrator sent our evaluation form via e-mail. This is easy to complete, and focuses on both practical issues / facilities, and the learning experience. **In particular we ask the teacher how well the visit met the learning objectives identified, and whether there are any suggestions for improvement in our offer (20).** We follow up any forms not returned with a reminder. Occasionally we follow up a returned form with an informal telephone call, to get more detail about how the visit went.

We have quarterly site meetings with a regular item to review the previous quarter's educational visits to identify and record any problems (21).

At the end of our season **we analyse the year's responses to look for trends and possible areas for improvement, before we update our documentation and leaflets for the new season. We used information and comments about the visit I have just described to develop our staff/volunteer training session on education, as an example of how children can work collaboratively on a specific task in small groups (22)**

Reference List

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

Further information

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

www.lotc.org.uk

www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk

www.gem.org.uk

Produced by the Heritage Sector Partnership with funding from the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom.