



CASE STUDY

Sandford Award Criteria 2

The education programmes at the site contribute to an understanding of the local and national heritage

Pupils visiting Bassetlaw Museum engage in role play and explore a grand townhouse as they learn about Victorian social living conditions through the lives of two local families – one rich and one poor.

Bassetlaw Museum, Nottinghamshire



Bassetlaw Museum, originally opened in 1983, is a small local authority museum, based in Amcott House, a fine Georgian town house in the centre of Retford. The house and grounds are home to a collection held by Bassetlaw District Council, which includes fine and decorative art, archaeology, social history, fashion and textiles, photography and agricultural items. In 2008 a HLF grant enabled a programme of refurbishment which has enhanced the museum displays by tastefully integrating modern technology.

Session Description: 'Victorian Retford Rich and Poor' – Key Stage 2

Explore the lives of the rich and the poor in Victorian Retford. Meet the Pegler and Allan families and compare their lives. Tour Amcott House, 'make a home' activity and see and handle real and replica Victorian objects.

The workshop involves role play, sorting and reasoning activities, a tour of the house, a handling session and a short power point presentation. Children will learn about the contrasts and similarities between rich and poor families in the Victorian era, including differences in housing, health, pastimes and occupations. The 'make a home' activity gives children the opportunity to plan the layout of a poor family's home based on real information from Retford's past.

How did the session help pupils understand Victorian social life and the difference between rich and poor in Retford?

'The museum's Education and Outreach Officer, assisted by two museum volunteers, used A3 images to introduce the children to the rich Peglar family who had lived in the house in the 1800s and the poor Allen family. The children were then divided into two groups: rich members of the family and poor servants.

The quality of teaching was excellent throughout and the children fully engaged in a variety of activities and investigations which held their interest and attention. Clearly a lot of thought had gone into developing this session and there was much attention to detail which contributed to the children's active learning. For example: [using] A3 images ... the children were able to compare historical images with later changes to the building as they walked around the outside of it.

When they all arrived once more at the front door and much to their consternation, only the 'rich' children were allowed into the house! The 'poor' children had to scuttle round to the trades men's entrance to re-enter the house! And which entrance should the governess use? She was neither a member of the family nor a below stairs servant! Something for the children to think about!

The children, in their two groups, enjoyed exploring the house ... Each group visited several rooms on the ground and first floors before 'swapping' ... and by the end of the session all children had visited all parts of the house and had gained a good insight into the reasons for historical changes in its architecture and the characters, lifestyle and importance of its owners.'

What impressed the Sandford Award judge?

'The children were engaged from the outset. They were able to discover the lives of the rich and the poor as they explored the house and readily absorbed and understood the information they acquired as they toured the house, both outside and inside. Then they all took part in a range of inspirational role play and hands-on activities using excellent resources and genuine and/or good quality replicas.

The room displays are full of interest and show much attention to detail. One boy was so very taken up with the reason behind the Victorian extension to the house to enable the installation of a bathroom that he could not resist saying out loud ... what he was thinking. His teacher told me that this is a boy who rarely contributes willingly to any class discussion, but here he was inspired to do so, and he was not alone in clearly enjoying and learning from this visit. The children were encouraged to 'look up' in all the rooms they visited and for another boy the beauty of Victorian gilding came to life, making a lasting impression on him, when the Education and Outreach Officer shone a spotlight on the ceiling to simulate Victorian candle light. All the children were intrigued by seeing the scratches made by the family's dog on the back of the Music Room door!'