



CASE STUDY

Sandford Award Criteria 1

The education programmes are delivered in a way that engages, informs and inspires visitors.

In the New Walk Museum and Art Gallery, handling ancient Egyptian objects 3000 years old is an awe-inspiring experience for visiting schoolchildren.

New Walk Museum & Art Gallery, Leicestershire



The museum originated in 1849 when the Literary and Philosophical Society formally presented to the town its various collections. Visitors can now enjoy galleries including Dinosaurs, The Den for under 5s, Wild Space, Ancient Egypt, Victorian art, Arts and Crafts, Picasso Ceramics: The Attenborough Collection, contemporary and World Arts, and Leicester's internationally renowned collection of German Expressionism.

Session Description: Egyptians: Meet the mummies - KS2

This session investigates ancient Egyptian beliefs and lifestyles. Pupils examine the collection of mummies and handle a range of 3000 year old artefacts. The session is divided into several sections which have active approaches that engage pupils in discussion, investigation and hands-on activities.

Hands-on Ancient Egyptians

Questions, answers and discussion

The facilitated workshop in the Egyptian Gallery was led by a freelance presenter whose skills as an ex-teacher ensured that the session was well pitched, informative, with a good range of different activities.

The session started with an excellent pictorial timeline, with individual depictions of significant periods in the past, starting with the Twentieth Century, and regressing through the Victorians, Tudors and Stuarts, Normans, Romans and Greeks before arriving at the Egyptian period. This strategy ensured the children were fully aware of the chronological position of the Egyptians in relation to the other periods they had studied. The Project Leader then used exposition and carefully judged question and answer, to explain a series of models, pictures and displays that illustrated Egyptian geography, climate, family life, clothing, food and cooking, and technology.

The children were then led to the part of the gallery that included four human “mummies” where they were encouraged to visually examine the exhibits, before the Project Leader explained the stories of two of the individuals.

‘a master class in trusting children with historical artefacts’

This activity was followed by an object handling session, which was prefaced by clear guidance about the way to hold, handle and examine the exhibits, which were all authentic and represented in a very tactile and immediate way, life in the Egyptian period. The children all had the opportunity to hold and touch all of the objects and showed great care and respect for them. The opportunity this gave every child to see, touch, explore objects from the past delivered a huge amount of sensory information (weight of objects, detail on carvings), and prompted a deluge of further questions inspired by this unique and awe inspiring experience. The exercise was a master class in trusting children with historical artefacts. The wonder, reverence and excitement on the faces of the children who examined these ancient possessions exemplified all that is good in heritage education.

The children then took part in a carousel of four activities, which included dressing up as an Egyptian, foods, making a “mummy” and an opportunity to look at unviewed sections of the gallery.

The dialogue between Project Leader and group ensured that the children were consistently engaged throughout the ninety minute session, gained an understanding of life in Egypt unobtainable from classroom study, and were active contributors. The Project Leaders explanation of cooking bread elicited from the children modern day examples of similar techniques used in their own homes.

Look, Find and Discover!

New Walk Museum and Art Gallery houses many important collections which are expertly curated and the clear labelling and attractive displays make it an excellent place for school parties to visit.

The galleries are bright, and the exhibits are well displayed with accessible levels of explanation. There is an inviting mix of artefacts, audio-visual aids, and displays where children can crawl under exhibits to view from different perspectives!

Resources are available for self-led groups. These include discussion cards, which include information about an object or subject area, with discussion prompts and suggested activities, and “Look, Find and Discover cards” and museum trails.

www.leicester.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/museums-and-galleries/museums-and-historic-venues/new-walk-museum-and-art-gallery/
