



CASE STUDY

Sandford Award Criteria 5

Educational resources and facilities are provided which enhance the quality of the learners' visit

At the Roman Baths the considerable knowledge, enthusiasm and teaching expertise of the workshop leader brought Roman Britain to life for students.

Roman Baths, Somerset



Located at the heart of the City of Bath, the Roman Baths, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, have a unique designated collection of 50,000 archaeological finds from pre-Roman and Roman Britain. The site surrounds Britain's only thermal springs and comprises four main elements: the Sacred Spring, the Temple of the Goddess Sulis Minerva, the bathing complex, which includes the iconic 'Great Bath,' and a museum. The history of the site is brought to life for visitors through an audio-tour, interactive galleries, tactile maps and models, digital projection, animated fly-throughs and costumed first-person interpretation.

The Session: Roman Life – KS2

Setting the Scene

An education room with a view

The group was escorted to the site's well-equipped Education Room, featuring an impressive reconstruction of a Roman *culina* and enjoying an aspect overlooking the magnificent 'Great Bath', the centrepiece of the Roman bathing complex. This view was used very effectively by the workshop leader as the stimulus for establishing the site's historical context and its relationship with the wider national and international story of the development of Roman Britain. Students were gathered in front of the window for a carefully structured question and answer session designed to audit students' prior knowledge and understanding.

The quality of questioning was a notable strength of this visit as the workshop leader demonstrated commendable expertise in differentiating the questions he posed to the group. He frequently used 'open' questions, such as asking students to explain the design of an amphora, prompting them to draw on both their wider contextual knowledge of Roman technology and their imagination in formulating a response.

Food for Thought, Write On! and Marvellous Mosaics

The 'Food for Thought' activity delivered by the workshop leader explored common ingredients and methods of food preparation in Roman cooking through a lively and highly stimulating artefact-handling session, using both genuine Roman and reproduction artefacts.

The 'Write On! Challenge' involved using a stylus to complete a series of written tasks in Roman script on a replica wax tablet made of plasticine. The activity was supported by a student-friendly resource file that provided highly accessible instructions regarding how to write your birthday in Latin, how to write in cursive script and using Roman numerals. Students enjoyed this activity immensely, due not least to the novelty of the writing implements and demonstrated an impressive focus in attempting to complete the challenge accurately using the vocabulary and numeracy sheets provided.

The second self-guided activity, called 'Marvellous Mosaics', was based on students using replica mosaic tiles, whose colours matched the colours of the site's mosaics, to create their own design on a magnetic whiteboard.

The second part of the visit consisted of a self-guided tour of the site supported by an audio-guide. Good practice in differentiating learning resources was evident through the workshop leader's offering students the opportunity to listen to either the adult or the children's version of the audio-guide, or a combination of them both.

The visiting group remained fully engaged in each of the learning activities involved in the 'Roman Life' workshop. The thought-provoking and considered questions they posed to the workshop leader reflected the progress they made in developing their knowledge and understanding of this topic.

The workshop leader's detailed knowledge of both the site, and Roman Britain more generally, enabled him to support students in establishing thematic and conceptual links between what they have studied at school and what they observed at the site, making it far more relevant to them. The relatively short period of time devoted to each activity helped to maintain a purposeful momentum to the workshop while sustaining students' focus.

The overall quality of the visit as a learning experience was extremely high and will certainly have made a lasting impression on students, firing their enthusiasm to learn more about Aquae Sulis as a microcosm of the transformational impact of Roman occupation.

Educational Resources and Facilities – What impressed the Sandford Award Judge?

'The most valuable educational resource ... was undoubtedly the workshop leader himself'

'The site has a well-equipped education room with the capacity to host a maximum of 35 people. The learning resources used during the visit were of a high quality and enhanced the learners' experience with students responding enthusiastically to the opportunity to write with a stylus on a 'wax' tablet and to handle authentic Roman artefacts. The resource file students used when completing the 'Write On! Challenge' was particularly helpful in presenting potentially complex subject matter in an accessible manner that was relatively straightforward for students to interpret.'

'The audio-tour that supported students as they explored the site independently was very effective in maintaining their interest and encouraging them to discover more by examining the artefacts on display in the museum galleries. The most valuable educational resource observed during the visit was undoubtedly the workshop leader himself. His considerable knowledge, enthusiasm and teaching expertise, enabled him to bring Roman Britain to life for the students, stimulating their desire to know more about this fascinating subject.'

Pre and post-visit resources

'The quality and breadth of the online resources which visiting schools can take advantage of in preparing students for their visit is one of the key strengths of this site. The Roman Baths offers a comprehensive package of pre-visit materials, ranging from a teacher's pack containing helpful notes on planning a self-guided visit to the site to trails

and Activity Packs designed to support specific areas of the curriculum, such as surface and volume or weathering. The organisation of these resources according to Key Stages makes them highly accessible for visiting schools who are also able to watch a video of a typical school visit to give them a better understanding of what to expect when they visit the site. Schools are even able to take a virtual tour of the key parts of the site and can download and listen to the audio-tour in advance of their visit.'

'In addition to pre-visit materials, the site also offers a wealth of resources for follow-up work in the classroom, including an excellent PowerPoint presentation on Romanisation and Aquae Sulis. The pre and post-visit learning materials produced by the site support students of all ages, from Key Stage 1 to those undertaking A Level study.'