



CASE STUDY

Sandford Award Criteria 2

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

Primary school pupils discover what life was like in St Albans under Roman rule and design their own stained glass windows in an art workshop.

St Albans Cathedral



St Albans Cathedral is the oldest site of continuous Christian worship in Britain. It stands over the place where Alban, the first martyr, was buried after giving his life for his faith over 1700 years ago.

The building's amazing mixture of architectural styles bears witness to the many centuries of its life, first as a monastic Abbey and now as a Cathedral. Down all those centuries

countless pilgrims have come to honour Saint Alban's sacrifice and offer their prayers at his shrine.

The present Cathedral was begun in 1077, using Roman bricks and flint from the ruined city of Verulamium. Its massive 11th century bell tower is the only remaining example of its type. It has the longest nave in England where you can see outstanding 13th and 14th century wall paintings.

Session Description: “Alban & the Romans” Workshop and Stained Glass Art Workshop’ – Key Stage 2

How did the learning activities help pupils understand life in St Albans under Roman rule?

‘Alban & the Romans’ workshop

‘The range of experiences started with the appearance of a magnificently costumed Roman soldier, the Education Officer himself, who marched in, and, in a masterly and fun filled Question and Answer session, explained the presence of the Roman army in the locality and also the function of his weapons.

The children were then split into three groups and each small group went with a member of the education team to different areas of the Cathedral to learn more about Roman life in Verulamium. Each pupil was assigned a simple, but effective, costume and given a particular role. This role play helped to develop an understanding of the historical events being studied (in this case the martyrdom of Alban) and also the emotions of those involved. The visit to St Alban's shrine was handled very sensitively.’

Stained Glass art workshop

‘During the morning session there had been discussions about various colourful windows and the second session built on this when it started with a tour studying different windows. The children then created their own windows in a marvellous workshop, led by two members of the team in the well equipped Education room. Throughout the day, the pupils were fully engaged and the lead teacher was delighted with the whole experience, including the “awe and wonder” with which her class had been imbued.’

What impressed the Sandford Award judges?

'The teacher had been quite specific in her objectives for the day and had discussed these with the Education Officer on her free pre-visit.'

These were:

- To consolidate the children's knowledge of the Romans and especially their presence in the locality
- To learn about St Alban and also saints in general and shrines
- To appreciate stained glass
- To have a sense of awe and wonder

She felt that all these objectives had been met ... and much more!

'There is an impressively wide range of programmes on offer, all of which, in different ways, contribute towards an understanding of the local and national heritage. For example, the workshop, 'Alban and the Romans' offers to KS1, 2, and 3 pupils an insight into the life of the saint and also puts this into the context of local and national Roman history. Likewise, in the workshop, 'Before and after the Dissolution', children learn not only what caused the Dissolution of the monasteries, but also how this affected communities at both a local and a national level.'