



CASE STUDY

Sandford Award Criteria 3

The programme has been developed through consultation with educational customers and advisers

The Education Team at Upton use 'Reflect and Review' sessions with pupils, critical friends and staff training to ensure their programmes meet teachers' needs.

Upton Court Educational Trust, Berkshire



Upton Court is a beautifully restored Elizabethan Manor House set in forty acres of secluded grounds and woodland near Reading. The house retains the remains of a medieval hall, but the majority of the extant building is 16th century in origin. The grounds include the original medieval fish ponds, an ice-house and a restored tithe barn. Teaching areas include Celtic and Saxon/Viking settlements, the latter complete with a longboat.

The Session:

Vicious Vikings – Key Stage 2

Using the session 'The Vikings as Vicious Warriors, Voyagers and Settlers' as a means of understanding that the invaders arrived seeking land to farm rather than primarily booty.

What impressed the Sandford Award Judge?

A 'Viking narrative from the start'

'Immersion in the [Vikings session] started from the moment the students stepped off their coaches and were met by costumed members of the site's education team, in role as Viking Berserkers. The Ufton teacher was quick to engage the students and wove the Viking narrative from the start. When crossing a road on site the Ufton teacher described it as a great stone road with large boats travelling along it. This was an effective way of addressing a hazard on site whilst continuing with the visit's engaging narrative. Throughout the welcome, a range of methods were used to ensure that all the students were on task and to check their understanding, including repeating information and asking questions.'

'Once the orientation was complete the Ufton teacher gathered the students around and used a narrative launch scroll to begin the story and link the whole visit together. When the group shouted the Viking greeting, the Ufton teacher noticed that one of the students may have been uncomfortable with the loud noise and mouthed to them to check that they were OK, showing an awareness of everyone in the group.'

Exploring change over time, similarities and differences

'All were wearing costume, as were their leaders [and] were carrying replica wooden Viking swords or authentic-looking shields. The students were to be inducted into the arts of attack and defence in open battle. All listened and watched the instructor with care and attention. Once demonstrated, students practised the skills. It was noted that both boys and girls joined the fray with equal gusto and open enjoyment. This equality was to be witnessed across all observed activities.'

'At the fire-cooking area there were particularly apposite comments made regarding the differences between modern means of cooking and the method now shown. From here forward, the use of ideas based on 'change over time,' 'similarities and differences' and 'connections, contrasts and trends' were offered to interrogate why improvements happened.'

Viking voyagers and suspended belief

'Within the woodland, a replica long boat had been constructed, complete with oars. Although not a complete boat, it was accepted as a Viking boat in which a voyage was to take place. No student challenged the obvious fact that the boat was not real, nor

was it seaworthy. A very good example of suspended belief in order to gain something more interesting! Again, but with different leaders in charge, attention and listening was exemplary, causing all planned experiences and discussions to proceed and for learning to be accomplished.'

Consultation and evaluation with teachers and pupils

Consultation

'All schools and visiting groups are individually consulted about their curriculum requirements prior to visits being planned. Students are consulted before the visit, during the visit and after the visit (reflect and review sessions) so that adjustments may be made to ensure that learning is progressing in the school's desired direction.'

'Two head teachers sit on the board of trustees and in this role are critical friends in the planning and consultation process. There is in place a partnership arrangement with the history and education departments of Reading University. Over time, this partnership has gradually changed the basis of planning away from a "know that", a simple factual content-learning approach, towards a "know how" enquiry-based approach to history. This involves students in enquiry and exploration about how to gather evidence about the past. In application, this involves members of the Ufton staff in engaging and helping students in working through a series of graded, sequential questions to ease focused thoughts towards the use of, for example, change over time, cause and effect and similarity and difference. This process was very clearly observed during the Vicious Vikings as students were guided through the process of seeing the warlike warriors gradually becoming farmers and heads of settled families.'

Evaluation

'Comprehensive evaluation forms are issued to all visiting group leaders and teachers. There is a good return rate and all are regularly reviewed by the Strategic Leadership Team. All comments and questions are considered by the Head of Learning and the History Manager, as well as by the History team themselves, as a means of reflecting on practice. Where offered ideas are accepted, they are recorded and acted upon as swiftly as possible. In addition, there are regular observations by all members of the learning staff to gather informed information about the impact of the programmes as a whole and of school-chosen aspects of programmes. In order to gain additional evaluative comments, the Managing Director meets with leaders of visiting groups to receive oral feedback in an atmosphere where statements may be expanded upon with focused questions.'

'The written report from the university is clear that the students who approach history in the Ufton manner gain more knowledge and understanding, confidence and interest/enthusiasm than students taught solely through classroom sessions. The judges observed that students engaged with the various activities were enthusiastic, focused and fully

enjoying their given tasks. Feedback from parents and schools reinforces the impact that the Ufton teaching and learning style has on students' greater knowledge, understanding and levels of interest.'

'An important element of the evaluation programme is that members of the Ufton staff are encouraged to self- and peer-evaluate. During the outdoor teaching seen, it was noted that on occasions the leader showing a new piece of learning to a group would receive a thumbs-up from a colleague at the end of the session. On-going personal reflection appeared to be a characteristic of teaching on this site.'

Staff training

'The education team meet regularly [subjects] can include pedagogy, questioning techniques, feedback from recent school visits, drama and characterisation. Peer shadowing and team teaching provide opportunities to share good practice and to develop new ideas or to observe and assess different styles of teaching and learning.

Members of staff attend conferences such as those provided by the Historical Association and visit other historic sites to enrich their knowledge and to gain fresh ideas.'