This document was classified as: OFFICIAL

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Using the Museum in your Classroom toolkit in Special Schools

The Museum in your Classroom Toolkit has been tried and tested with Special Schools in the Tees Valley – with great results. Among many benefits, teachers have found creating a school exhibition is an excellent way to focus learning on students' core communication, independence, physical and thinking targets.

The Toolkit is particularly successful for Special Schools because the approach is:

- **Multi-sensory and immersive** – visiting a museum and exploring handling objects through a museum loan box immerses students in their chosen theme and provides opportunities to learn through touching, smelling, listening, looking – and even tasting!
- **Creative** – with opportunities to explore and present historical themes through art, music, drama and dressing up, film, performance and digital tools.
- **Great for communication skills** - creating a school exhibition extends opportunities for students to communicate in purposeful ways that are appropriate to them, from non-verbal sensory exploration, to signing, speaking and writing by hand or electronically.
- **Relevant** – students link people and events of the past to where they live, their own lives and experiences.
- **Flexible and adaptable** – the Toolkit activities are designed to work across ages and abilities, and to inspire new ideas – from students as well as teachers.

This document was classified as: OFFICIAL

Tees Valley Museums

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

FIVE TOP TIPS FOR USING THE MUSEUM IN YOUR CLASSROOM TOOLKIT WITH SEN AND SEND STUDENTS

The Toolkit's simple steps provide an easy guide to planning, researching and staging your exhibition. These tips from teachers in special schools will help make the journey even smoother:

1. **VISITING A MUSEUM - ARRANGE A PRE-VISIT** All the museums featured in the Toolkit offer visits and hands-on learning sessions for groups – from exploring the world's first passenger railway, to going down a real mine. Most areas are wheelchair accessible and suitable for students with Severe Learning Difficulties. Contact the Education Officer to talk about how they can meet your group's needs. Where possible, arrange a pre-visit to familiarise staff with the layout and facilities.

2. **BORROW A MUSEUM LOANS BOX FOR MULTI-SENSORY LEARNING** All the museums featured in the Toolkit have themed boxes of museum objects available for groups to borrow. The objects can be handled and explored, used to revisit and/or replicate the museum experience and included in exhibitions.

3. **MAKE THE MOST OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY** Using iPads or other tablets can be a great way to involve students and to create engaging and accessible materials, like simple films or soundscapes, for your exhibition visitors to enjoy.

4. MAKE YOUR EXHIBITION DISPLAYS ACCESSIBLE AND MULTI-SENSORY

Museums and galleries are constantly looking for new ways to make exhibitions accessible for people with special needs and disabilities. Work with the students to help them make their displays accessible for each other and their visitors. Try:

- Making tactile displays and Please Touch labels.
- Adding symbols to written labels.
- Recording a simple 'audio guide' on a tablet for visitors to listen to through headphones.
- Creating a short film of students speaking and signing a story, information or song.

5. TAKE YOUR TIME, WORK TOGETHER, KEEP IT SIMPLE

The Toolkit is a great opportunity to plan and work collaboratively across groups and age ranges, with advantages both for teachers who can support each other, and students who benefit from peer-to-peer learning and mentoring. Once you get started, a school exhibition can quickly snowball, inspiring a whole world of creative ideas and approaches to learning. Involve the students as much as possible. Allow plenty of time to plan for a museum visit and for classroom work, with room for students' ideas to grow and take shape.

"The approach worked particularly well because it made the topic multi-sensory and kinaesthetic. I would recommend Special Schools do an exhibition at least once a year."

SEN Teacher