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What Works KS3 - KS5? : Tips for working with secondary schools

Judith Carruthers, Museum Learning Consultant, April 2015

There are considerable barriers to engaging with secondary schools due to the curriculum pressures that exist and logistical issues over organising school visits. Developing sustainable partnerships with local schools is the key way of working at this level rather than just generically marketing a menu of sessions and resources that hits curriculum areas.

These tips offer ways of creating these partnerships and developing an offer that meets the needs of schools:

1. Do your research

- Before contacting teachers, make sure you are familiar with the language they use and what their curriculum needs are:

- Schools should be displaying their curriculum on their websites.
- At Key Stage 3, a new curriculum has been introduced

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-secondary-curriculum>

- Be aware that academies do not have to follow this curriculum. By December 2014, 74% of secondary schools in East of England had converted into academies.¹
- Find out the content of the new GCSE and A level courses:

AQA : <http://www.aqa.org.uk/>

OCR: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/>

Edexcel: <http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/home.html>

CCEA: <http://www.rewardinglearning.org.uk/>

- Post GCSEs, there are different learning pathways that students can follow, so be aware of them:
 - full-time education – e.g. at a school or college
 - an apprenticeship or traineeship
 - part-time education or training - as well as being employed, self-employed or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week

What courses are available?

<https://www.ucas.com/ucas/after-gcses/find-course/qualifications-you-can-take-after-gcses>

¹ Ofsted East of England Regional report 2013/14

2. Contact teachers

The key element is finding an enthusiastic individual who wants to use your site to inspire their students. This person could come from any subject department, not just History, e.g. Geography, Maths or Art and would be looking for a site as inspiration for their students. Don't worry about not being an expert in their field of study.

The best time to market to schools is directly after Easter, i.e. from late April to June. Most teachers will be planning their next academic year in June.

How to make a successful contact

There is no one answer to this question. Different tactics have to be employed if an initial approach does not work, and patience and persistence are required! The following are ways that have been suggested by teachers and museum staff working with secondary schools. Everyone recommended that face to face contact is the most powerful way for persuading teachers to work with you.

- Email the school and ask for a meeting with the head of a relevant department to discuss potential ways of working. Offer to go to their school in the first instance but ideally try and persuade them to come to your site so they can be inspired by it. Do not be afraid to email again if initial contact fails as teachers are bombarded with messages.
- Don't just look to contact teachers with specific curriculum responsibilities; secondary school staffing includes teachers with other responsibilities that are more likely be seeking outside support:
 - e.g. Teaching & Learning coordinators, Managing the transition into year 7

Schools are also looking to develop students 'soft' skills such personal, learning, and thinking skills, and recognise that museums offer valuable support in this area.

This framework, whilst now archived, provides useful guidance on these skills:

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110223175304/http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/uploads/PLTS_framework_tcm8-1811.pdf

- Browse the websites of local schools and look out for any active teachers running projects or planning events - they may be the best ones to approach.
- Be proactive in joining local cultural and learning networks that will widen your field of contacts. Through these contacts you may find an interested teacher. ACE Bridges (Royal Opera House Bridge and Norfolk & Norwich Festival Bridge in East of England) have set up relevant networks throughout the region. ACE Bridge staff may also be to recommend pro-active schools.

<http://www.roh.org.uk/learning/royal-opera-house-bridge>

<http://www.nnfestival.org.uk/>

- Find out about colleagues' school contacts – some may be school governors or have relatives working in schools. This personal connection is likely to increase the successful nature of your approach
- Schools belong to networking clusters and their meetings can be useful forums for talking to a large group of teachers. Finding out what clusters exist can be difficult as most are not run by local authorities and they vary according to different geographical areas so the best way to find out tends to be through personal teacher contact.
- Feeder primary schools can be a good way to find contacts in a secondary school

3. Developing projects and resources

- One way to build on the initial contact is to run twilight training sessions. Buy-in from senior leadership is ideal to ensure teachers attend but teacher feedback suggests that if they were “treated as adults with own independent interests” they would be more likely to attend.
e.g. including a curator talking about an aspect of the collections, behind the scenes tours, free tickets for teachers and their families to exhibitions and events.
- Run your secondary school sessions in the afternoon as schools find it easier to manage the logistics for these times. Start sessions from 1.30pm onwards and it is possible to run beyond the end of the school day.
- Secondary schools are looking for real world briefs for their students to work on, particularly with post 16 courses. This type of project is easy to manage and can give you useful products as well as enable you to engage effectively with this age group.

e.g. Luton Culture museum staff worked with University of Bedfordshire, computer science students to develop online games to complement Luton Culture school offer. This entailed the museum staff creating a brief for the students and then appraising the final games. The University provided all the required technical support.
- Use enquiry questions to frame your sessions. Particularly effective museum sessions seem to be those which involved an element of debate.
e.g. Staff at Ely Museum set students up to take part in a historical debate: Should the Fens be drained?
- Secondary schools need to find activities for targeted small groups of students throughout the year and will be looking for outside sites to take them. Such groups of students include Gifted and Talented, students with learning disabilities, students with English as an additional language (EAL). Working with these small groups of students may be easier to accommodate at your site rather than whole year groups. Schools are also likely to own minibuses which can transport this number of students thus overcoming the cost barrier of transport. Possible people to liaise with to identify these students are *Leader of Student Support /Inclusive Education Leader/Special Educational Needs Coordinator*.
- Be prepared to do outreach sessions at secondary schools rather than expecting them to visit your site. This overcomes the school's problems with organising supply cover for teachers' timetables and the cost barrier of transport.

- Secondary schools run enrichment weeks particularly in the second half of the summer term in which they collapse the curriculum and students do a variety of activities both at school and off site. These weeks offer good opportunities for museums to work with schools.
- Offer to take work experience students. Students, particularly at Year 10 and 12 need to undertake a week of work experience. Ensure that you offer a range of work shadowing and practical activities so the student is not just used to do photocopying and accessioning! Also check that you are compliant with DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) requirements as you are likely to be working with young people on a regular basis.
- Arts Awards is a good tool for engaging targeted groups of secondary school students as it is adaptable and provides a structured way of working towards an accreditation award.
<http://www.artsaward.org.uk>

e.g. University of Cambridge Museums are involved in using Arts Award with a range of audiences including SEN students and pupil premium students.

<https://camunivmuseums.wordpress.com/2013/02/15/arts-award-at-the-fitzwilliam-museum/>

- Working with your local initial teacher training (ITT) provider can develop your links with secondary schools and also convert new enthusiastic teachers to the power of working with museums. Different museums across the region worked with different departments of ITT providers.

e.g. In Norfolk, History and Maths PGCE students have a long established programme of work with the Castle Museum. More recently English PGCE students have also visited Norwich Castle Museum and were particularly inspired by the possibility of using museum space and objects to bring English Literature GCSE and A level set texts to life eg for drama/ re-enactment.
- Don't get bogged down with using social media in projects – as far as possible let school partners manage this element.