



The Victorian School Experience

These are some guidelines to help you to plan a Victorian Day at your school. The exact format may vary and can be tailored to your requirements. Ideally we need a classroom that can be made to look more like a Victorian Classroom. You might also like to consider using a nearby Victorian hall or building. Generally we would want to work in groups of about 25-30, but we might be able to work with larger groups by arrangement. The children may come dressed in Victorian costume, or we can provide suitable quick change Victorian clothing if required. We supply a “Victorian” teacher, but the help of the real teacher or classroom assistant is encouraged. We bring with us a number of props and useful teaching aids. The lesson lasts 30-40 minutes, but may take longer if the children have to dress. Sometimes the school also likes to take photographs. A longer session could be split into two 30 minute blocks with playtime in between

The Edwardian School Experience

Some schools have asked us to do Edwardian days, usually to tie in with an anniversary. There are a few differences, but essentially the format is the same as a Victorian Day.

What we teach in the classroom

Children are instructed on standing still and upright, without talking, beside desk until told to be seated. They learn how to greet their teacher. They also learn that if any teacher visits the classroom, they should show respect by standing up and wait to be instructed to sit again. A brief teaching is given on deportment and hygiene. Sometimes do a bit of walking with a book on the head to practice deportment.

Introduction to writing with the sand tray, and then the children get to write using slates. Depending on time and age of children, some instruction in style of writing is given. Introduction to the dip pen and copybooks. If there is sufficient time, older children might like to practice copybook style writing.

A little bit of information about slow or “stupid” pupils is given, with a volunteer being asked to wear the dunce's hat. This is usually a photo opportunity. Brief introduction to school punishment such as cane, slipper, chalk, etc. Children learn how much tighter the discipline was in Victorian times.

If time permits (unlikely in half hour sessions) we can introduce the primer and talk about the moral teaching of schools, we might touch on the history of schools, development from Sunday Schools and church schools, and talk about the daily prayer and hymn.

If time permits (ditto) we also do some teaching on lesson materials, such as reciting tables, reading out and learning dates of Kings and Queens, and studying a map of the British Empire.

We usually do a little bit on old money, allowing children the chance to examine some old coins for themselves, and old weights and measures.

What we can do in the playground (optional second activity)

Usually start out by doing PT (physical training) getting the children to do old fashioned exercises. (The version we use actually dates back to just after WW2, so it is quite "modern" but it is a good way for children to learn old fashioned skills such as standing in a straight line and standing still.)

Introduction to the types of games that might have been played by children, such as hopscotch, marbles, skipping, tops, stilts and hoops. I sometimes mention conkers, but not all schools are happy with this "dangerous" game being introduced.

The children then get the chance of playing some of the games for themselves.

We then sometimes play some old fashioned games such as tag and "party" games.

If the weather is bad, then some activities could still be done in a hall.

An additional craft activity (optional activity)

You might like to consider working with the children on decoupage or we can include it in our programme. This is a craft activity for boys and girls. Pictures are cut from catalogues and magazines and glued onto paper, or card. Small pictures are needed, and it is possible to get CDs of suitable decoupage images which can be printed in advance. For the more adventurous a tray or a small box can be decorated. The secret is making a pleasing arrangement of pictures and to show your ability at cutting around the pictures. The final result is varnished to make a durable finish. An easy modern finish can be to laminate the decorated card or picture rather than varnish it.

Although decoupage predates Victoria in its origins, it would certainly have continued in popularity as a child's activity until WW2.

We also offer scrap book making, peg doll making, and making a model of a Victorian school.

What we bring

A selection of props including slates and playground toys. We can also bring dressing up clothes if required. We may also be able to bring a selection of items for sale, such as slates, marbles, and old fashioned things, and we would give the school a proportion of the proceeds.

The cost

The total cost is made up of four elements:

- a) The visit charge
- b) The travel charge
- c) The accommodation charge
- d) Additional services charge

a) Visit charge

STANDARD VISIT

Basic charge of £250 per full day. (This is for one teacher. Additional staff are chargeable, please enquire)

£200 per day for subsequent days.

£900 for a full week.

You can combine various classes or even share a visit with another local school.

SPECIAL OFFER half day visit £100. Can be a morning or afternoon.

Maximum class size 35 and maximum of two classes.

Please note that although we offer half day visits to schools that are not local we may have to include an overnight stay if the distance is more than about 50 miles away when a morning visit is requested. We will advise on this when you make an enquiry.

b) Travel charge

Mileage is charged at 30p a mile each way.

c) Accommodation charge

Overnight accommodation is charged at £60 per night. (This is required for visits starting in the morning and more than about 50 miles from our base.)

d) Additional services charge

- 25p per person is added for laundry charges if costumes are supplied.
- 25p per person is added for craft activities where pupil materials are supplied. For some specialized craft activities such as toymaking it might be more than this, we will advise.
- **Inner City Surcharge** We may have to make an additional charge to schools in inner city locations. This is because often accommodation is more expensive, we may have additional car parking charges (partly because of the value of the artifacts and equipment we carry), and there are other costs such as congestion charge and so on.

VAT is added to all the prices, but we will provide a VAT invoice so you can reclaim it.

We will confirm the charges once you have let us know your requirements.

I can combine visits with other schools in the area. The visit could be shared over two or three classes each day, or if a local teacher handles the playtime activities, then I could probably do five or six classes. This compares reasonably with the cost of taking the children to an external Victorian facility, and is much easier to accommodate. I am prepared to travel anywhere, but obviously the further I have to go, the more the cost of mileage, and of course it might involve an extra overnight stay.

Security

Some of the items we bring with us are valuable because they are old, not always in financial terms, but in rarity, so it is important that we can use a room that is reasonably secure. It is also helpful to use a dedicated classroom, as it takes some time to pack and unpack the equipment we use. If there is a difficulty with this then do let us know and we can find a suitable work around.

CRB/ISA Checks

We have had some schools that have had problems with CRB requirements for visits. As far as CRB certificates go they are specific to the school and are not transferable. I did have a certificate some years ago when I was a school governor, but I have subsequently lost it, and as I am self-employed I cannot apply for a new one: it has to be requested by my "employer." My wife, who often comes with me, as a serving school governor does have a certificate, but only for her role as a governor. As we do not offer unsupervised visits, it is usually up to the discretion of the Head Teacher as to whether we are accepted. Alternatively the school may apply for CRB clearance for the visit, and we will provide all necessary documentation.

When the new ISA scheme comes into force in July 2010 we understand that can apply for certificates ourselves.

Contractual

Although I will make every effort to fulfill bookings on the date and time agreed, there may be occasions when, for circumstances beyond my control, this is not possible, for example illness, bad weather or vehicle breakdown. Should this occur, then our liability will extend to a maximum of refunding any fee paid, and we will not be responsible for consequential losses. In most cases, the event can be rescheduled at a mutually agreed time.

About me

Some years ago I started working as a volunteer, in my spare time, at a genuine Victorian school and museum. I served as Chairman of the museum for a while, was also a Trustee, and most recently have been the Victorian headmaster. At 58 years of age, I have never actually been a real teacher, although I have done many years of youth work, been a school governor, done careers advice for school, and was voted the most scariest exam invigilator at our local school! My eldest son is involved in the technical side of theatre, so we have done lots of work with schools on drama and music.

I am a self employed publisher, as well as helping run a computer business. I started offering school visits after I became aware from museum visitors, that some schools found it too difficult or inconvenient to actually come to the museum. I also started the website to try to provide more information on Victorian schooling and Victorian times, an ongoing project that is far from complete.

You will also find that we sometimes have other helpers, especially on larger school visits, but all these helpers will have additional skills to offer.

Preparing a modern classroom to look old

A Victorian classroom would be quite austere and bleak, so try to cover up notice boards and things like that. The children would sit in rows not in clusters. Girls would generally not sit with boys. Hopefully you could arrange the desks in lines. Obviously you can only work with the furniture that you have got. Teachers/helpers can then sit around the edge. Teachers desk and chair at the front. If possible, a blackboard and easel, definitely no whiteboards or interactive boards.

On the wall, things such as charts of tables, usually hand written. Probably a map of the British Empire. A portrait of Queen Victoria.

Staff Training and Advice

We can provide training to your staff, or provide advice on aspects of the Victorian School Experience.

Contact

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