



SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM
UTTLESFORD MUSEUM SERVICE

Learning Policy 2014

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Approved by Museum Management Working Group: _____ Date _____
[checked by two members of MMWG for Accreditation submission, to go to MMWG
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1. Policy and Learning Mission Statement

1.1 Learning is at the heart of Saffron Walden Museum. As such, this policy informs all activities across the organisation and is not restricted to the work of the Learning Officer. Learning considerations are given due weight in all areas of Museum decision-making.

1.2 This document introduces the framework within which the policy operates. This Policy supports Saffron Walden Museum's Forward Plan (see Key Aims 2d, 3a-g, 4d, 5d, 6a-d) and should be read in conjunction with the Museum's Access and Customer Care Policies.

1.3 'Educational provision at Saffron Walden Museum aims to provide pathways to greater understanding and enjoyment of the museum's collections. These pathways are created by learning experiences designed to be appropriate for different audiences who use the museum.'

This is the education mission statement of the Museum and this policy sets out the ways in which the mission statement is carried out by defining:

- The principles which guide educational practice at Saffron Walden Museum
- The target audiences the museum wants to work with
- What audiences can expect from the learning service
- The resources that are available for this work
- The ways in which learning experiences are delivered

All members of staff are concerned to some extent with the provision of learning experiences. This policy has been written after a consultation process with the Museum staff, as well as Service users.

2 Guiding Principles of the Education Service

2.1 Learning is at the heart of the Museum Service

2.2 All users of the education service, including children, young people and vulnerable adults, are treated with equal respect and sensitivity

2.3 Their safety and physical comfort are of primary importance

2.4 As a centre for lifelong learning, the Museum's learning service must take differing learning styles into account by being flexible and imaginative in the ways that learning is delivered.

2.5 Learning activities should always be object- or specimen- based.

2.6 Consultation with users and non-users is constant and evaluation of learning activities regularly takes place.

2.7 Access to learning activities is made available to all.

3 Target Audiences

The learning provision at Saffron Walden Museum is aimed at all users of the Museum Service but with limited staffing and resources certain target groups have been identified to concentrate resources effectively. Visitor surveys and a non-user survey were used as evidence (surveys used data from 2012, 2013, 2014).

Target groups are subject to constant review as new opportunities or needs arise. For learning services the target groups are:

- 3.1 Family groups with children aged 3 - 12 years.
- 3.2 School groups, especially pre-school, Key Stage One, Key Stage Two and home educated children.
- 3.3 Adults with special interests in areas covered by the collections.
- 3.4 Young people aged 13 - 18 years (secondary school, Key Stages Three and Four and Sixth Form), and in general young people 16 – 29 in keeping with the Museum Service's audience development priorities.

4 What audiences can expect from the learning service

Saffron Walden Museum is committed to serving the needs and exceeding the expectations of existing and potential audiences. This is achieved through a broad range of programmes and services based on the collections and drawing on the expertise of staff within the organisation. Visitors can therefore expect us to adhere to the following principles.

Learning principles

- 4.1 Experiences will be stimulating, enjoyable, relevant and appropriate for the visitor, setting museum objects in a contemporary framework, thereby motivating visitors to learn.
- 4.2 Programmes will maximise the potential of the museum and museum grounds as unique learning environments and explore the many stories and interpretations that they offer in a way that is relevant to our audiences.
- 4.3 Programmes will recognise that people learn in different ways and have different strengths and interests, so multiple ways of exploring are always provided with a great variety of activities.
- 4.4 Learning will be built onto the framework of visitors' existing knowledge. Interdisciplinary approaches will be used to aid this process as they tap into a range of existing experiences and create new links and understanding.
- 4.5 Opportunities for intellectual progression will be provided where possible to ensure visitors are challenged, stimulated and can develop. When this is not

possible partnerships will be developed with other learning providers allowing us to 'signpost' visitors to other developmental opportunities.

- 4.6 We will evaluate the impact of our learning services and always seek ways in which to improve.

5 Resources

- 5.1 Saffron Walden Museum holds collections that are varied and extensive. The collections have been built up since the foundation of the Museum in 1835 by the Saffron Walden Museum Society, and are being developed continually but selectively according to the Museum Service's Collections Development Policy (formerly known as the Acquisition & Disposal Policy)*. The collections contain significant objects from many different time periods and cultures as well as natural history specimens and local history. Artefacts selected from the reserve collections are used for object handling sessions and as visual aids.
- 5.2 Staffing - There is one full time Visitor Services and Learning Officer, who dedicates 2 days per week to the delivery of learning sessions. Other staff are involved in the delivery of learning, especially the Curator, Natural Sciences Officer and Collections Officer (Human History).
- 5.3 Learning through Work Experience and Student Placements – When staffing and projects allow, the Museum offers placements, e.g. to students in further and higher education, including annual placements for trainee teachers from Cambridge University's Department of Education.
- 5.4 The Museum has a dedicated education room that holds groups of up to 35 seated adults. An area in the Museum gallery space can be used for similar sized groups.
- 5.5 Walled grounds laid to grass and trees, containing the ruins of a 12th century castle, surround the Museum.
- 5.6 A loyal audience of family and school groups has been established.
- 5.7 The service is operated by Uttlesford District Council with additional support from Saffron Walden Museum Society.
- 5.8 New partnerships have been established with bodies such as the North and West Essex Adult Community College, Saffron Walden Archive Point, Saffron Walden Library Service and Uttlesford SureStart.

6 Ways in which Formal Learning is delivered at Saffron Walden Museum

- 6.1 'Drop in' sessions for families held during the school holidays. These usually take the form of art or craft based activities suitable for children.
- 6.2 'Museum Minis', monthly activity sessions for 2-5 year-olds and their parents or carers (currently suspended, hoping to resume in September 2014).
- 6.3 Booked sessions for schools and other education-based groups, including object handling workshops led by a museum learning specialist.

- 6.4 Object loan boxes, covering both natural and human history topics from the National Curriculum, on request from school and other educational groups.
- 6.5 Activity days with re-enactor groups, artists or performers suitable for all ages.
- 6.6 Workshops for adults with special interests led by experts.
- 6.7 Lecture series for adults with invited speakers.
- 6.8 Talks given to adult groups at venues outside the Museum.
- 6.9 Practical sessions for adults or families - e.g. how to classify pottery finds, drawing in the museum.
- 6.10 Reminiscence Loan Boxes and/or sessions on request for care homes and day centres in Uttlesford.
- 6.11 Practical sessions for young people - e.g. film making, spray painting inspired by the collections.
- 6.12 Natural history based investigations in the Museum grounds.

* The Museum was founded by the Saffron Walden Natural History Society, later renamed the Saffron Walden Museum Society. The Society (now Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd), which is a registered charity, still owns the Museum building and the collections. Museum and collections are on long-term lease to Uttlesford District Council, which operates the Museum Service under a management agreement with the Society.