



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT EDUCATIONAL VISITS

1. Name and address of our venue:

South Downs Planetarium and Science Centre
Kingsham Farm
Kingsham Road
CHICHESTER
West Sussex
PO19 8AE

2. Our website:

Please visit our website at www.southdowns.org.uk

3. Exactly what does your venue offer for educational visits?

The South Downs Planetarium and Science Centre was established to provide a facility where people of all ages could learn about science in a very visual and exciting way.

Encircled by the stars in our 11-metre diameter auditorium, it will feel as though you are sitting beneath a fabulous, clear night sky. It is a truly 'Big Sky' experience. Our fulldome shows feature stunning immersive video and breathtaking colour images that completely surround the audience.

Since opening in 2001, the Planetarium welcomes around 10,000 children of school age every year. In 2015/16 a total of 164 schools and colleges visited us. Through its colourful displays, demonstrations and presentations in the main auditorium, education room and foyer areas, young people of all ages are introduced to the awe and wonder of the universe around us and are inspired to want to learn more.

The Planetarium is an educational charity managed and operated by a large team of volunteers and enthusiasts, who have a passion for science and education and believe that learning should be fun! This enthusiasm is clearly infectious because many of our school groups and individual visitors come back to us time and time again.

4. Why are you a great place for educational visits?

The effective teaching of astronomy involves viewing the night sky, but to take students "stargazing" is often impractical for many reasons. The Planetarium brings the night sky to the students. It makes clear many of the basic aspects of astronomy and space in an exciting and effective way. Our customers come to us for a stimulating and inspiring 'outside the classroom experience' learning about the wonders of space in a safe, friendly and well-organised environment

5. We do have the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge.

6. What does a typical educational visit include?

Our presentations complement school studies in work for the well-established National Curriculum Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4, the new International Primary Curriculum, GCSE and IGCSE Science, Edexcel GCSE Astronomy, General Studies, including environmental science, Physics at AS and A2 level, including the specialist Astrophysics Option at A2 level.

Presentations can also be made to suit specific requirements, for different key stages or for different curriculum topics, or tailored to the needs of a specific group. For example, we have provided specialist subject-led presentations on the Arctic Sky, Landing on the Moon, Living and Working in Space, Mission to Mars and, for older students, topics such as life on other planets, the birth, life and death of stars, galaxies, the Big Bang and the expanding universe may be covered.

Each presentation in the main auditorium, given by an experienced lecturer, is of about 50-60 minutes' duration, followed by a question and answer session. All shows have a live presenter, enabling plenty of interaction with the children.

Most school visits last between two and three hours. A typical visit will include a show in the main auditorium with questions afterwards, plus a number of additional activities, which will be tailored to the requirements of the individual school, and the total time available for the visit. Schools coming from some distance can bring a snack or packed lunch to eat during their visit, but please arrange and agree this with the Planetarium in advance.

7. What group sizes do you cater for?

The maximum group size that we can accommodate in the main auditorium is 96 students and accompanying adults, plus there are four additional spaces for wheelchairs. Some schools bring an entire year group at a time. Larger schools may require more than one visit on different days, or in two groups on the same day, while smaller schools often bring two year groups at a time.

With small school groups (<30 students), we reserve the right to book in more than one group at the same time, but we will always ensure that the groups are of the same age and have the same learning objectives when sharing the venue.

8. Do you provide projects, teacher's packs, work sheets or any useful information?

We provide visiting school groups with a teachers' pack of useful educational resources and an evaluation form at the end of the visit. Students have the chance to take part in a fun quiz, based on the displays around the Planetarium, which will be tailored to the age of the visiting group.

9. Are you happy for children to take photos, video or audio?

In the foyer areas and the education room, visitors may take pictures or make video and audio recordings as they wish. While in the main auditorium, however, it is essential that all attendees allow their eyes to become accustomed to the dark. For this reason we ask that all mobile phones and iPads are turned off for the duration of the main presentation and flash photography is not permitted, but once the lights come up at the end of the show, students and teachers may take any pictures or video recording that they wish.

10. What is your process for booking pre arranged risk assessments?

We do not provide risk assessments for teachers, as every school's requirements in this regard are slightly different, but teachers may book pre-arranged risk assessment visits at any mutually convenient time. Just call our General Manager, Andrew Copping, on 01243 774400 to make the necessary arrangements. The Planetarium has Public Liability Insurance with cover of up to £10 million.

11. Does your venue have an Education Officer?

The venue's Education Officer is Dr John Mason MBE.

12. What is the cost: of the visit?

As of September 2023, the cost of a typical Planetarium visit is £5.50 per child, teachers and adult helpers free of charge, but West Sussex LEA schools enjoy a discount of 50p per child on the normal admission price. There is a minimum hire charge of £180 per school group, reduced to £160 for West Sussex LEA schools. Specialist presentations including those for GCSE or A level students will incur a slightly higher *per capita* charge.

13. Is specific clothing required for the trip?

There is no special clothing required for the visit.

14. Do you have first aid on site or will the group need to bring a qualified first aider?

A number of the Planetarium volunteers are qualified first-aiders, but it is normal practice for every visiting school to have at least one qualified first-aider accompanying the visiting group.

15. Please list facilities available.

The Planetarium has adequate toilets for large visiting school group as well as separate facilities for the disabled. Complimentary tea and coffee is provided for all accompanying teachers and adult helpers. The Planetarium also has a vending machine selling canned cold drinks.

There is also has a well-stocked sales kiosk selling a range of reasonably-priced educational items from 50p upwards. Groups using the sales kiosk typically bring about £3 of pocket money per child. We are also able to provide 'goody bags' for younger children from £1 per child by prior arrangement.

It is possible for children to eat snacks and packed lunches in the education room, again by prior arrangement. There is also a secure, gated hard-surface playground area outside which visiting school groups may use under supervision by their teachers and at their own risk.

16. What are your disabled facilities?

The Planetarium has excellent facilities and easy access for disabled patrons. If you are wanting to bring more than four wheelchairs in one group, please let us know in advance, so we can make the necessary arrangements.

17. What are your opening days and hours?

The Planetarium is open for visits by school and college groups during normal school hours on any days during term-time, but **ADVANCE BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL**. We are particularly busy from October until March, so please do not leave it until the last minute to book your visit as we may be unable to accommodate you on the dates you want.

18. How to book

The easiest way to book your Planetarium visit is to telephone us during office hours (9.30am to 4.30pm) on weekdays and ask to speak to our General Manager, Andrew Copping or Education Officer, Dr John Mason, who will also be able to answer any queries you may have.

The Planetarium's telephone number is 01243 774400. You can also send us an email enquiry to sdownsplanet@btconnect.com, but do please provide us with a contact telephone number, as it is usually easier to sort out the finer details over the telephone rather than by email exchange.

19. We receive hundreds of lovely letters from children who have visited us and many testimonials from the teachers accompanying them. Here is a selection:

“Impressive answering of all the children’s questions at their level. Friendly, communicative staff made the visit a great success. We will be back!”

Year 5/6, St. Columba Academy, Fareham, February 2015

“This was a wonderful visit, perfectly pitched with enthusiastic input and a passion for space. The kids loved it!”

Year 5, St. John’s Primary School, Horsham, March 2015

“Another fantastic day that was brilliantly arranged and seamlessly delivered. Many thanks.”

Year 4, The Mill Primary Academy, Crawley, March 2015

“A fantastic experience for my Year 5s. Pitched really well and we all learnt a lot. Thank you!”

St. Mary Magdalene Primary School, Brighton, March 2015

“The day was packed with facts and info. delivered brilliantly. The pace was fast but every eventuality was catered for. A great day out. Thank you.”

Year 5/6, Nyewood Junior School, Bognor Regis, April 2015

“A really fantastic visit that came well recommended by many teachers and previous visitors.”

Year 7, The Angmering School, May 2015

“An excellent school trip! Volunteers so friendly, helpful and knowledgeable. They had planned everything perfectly for us (including tea). Thank you and see you next year!”

Year 5, Seaside Primary School, Lancing, June 2015

“Helpful from initial enquiry to booking. Talks pitched at perfect level for our Year 5 children. Content very relevant to current curriculum. Staff welcoming, friendly and knowledgeable. Great to go on a trip where the stock in the shop is varied but priced very reasonably. All very efficient.”

Downsbrook Middle School, Worthing, June 2015

“As in our previous visits, everything was well-pitched and the whole experience was enjoyable and informative for both students and staff. Well done and thank you!”

Merlin Class, Fordwater School, Chichester, June 2015

20. Is there anything else that you feel is important and want to include in your information?

Planning the transport for your visit

We recognise that school visits must always be cost effective, especially in the current economic climate, and that they need careful planning to achieve this. It may be for example that it is cheaper to use minibuses or parents' cars rather than to hire a large coach. In addition, if your school is near to a bus route or railway station did you know that operators are willing and often able to make special arrangements to meet your needs? This might include reserving seats together in a railway carriage or running an additional vehicle on a scheduled bus route at a time agreed by prior arrangement. Such options may well be cheaper than coach hire. The Planetarium is only a short walk from Chichester rail and bus stations.

The following are the relevant contact details for the companies who will be pleased to discuss your specific requirements for group bookings on scheduled services. Please be sure to allow at least one week's notice ahead of your travel date.

Bus - Stagecoach: 08451210190

Train - Southern Rail: 08451272920