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ROTHER VALLEY COUNTRY PARK TEACHERS' INFORMATION PACK

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The place for Water Sports, Nature, Education & Events

Rother Valley Country Park Mansfield Road Wales Bar Sheffield S26 5PQ
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Section 1 :Pre Visit Information

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in visiting Rother Valley Country Park. We hope that the visit will give your pupils both information and inspiration. The visit allows pupils to see for themselves what a country park is, how it provides recreation and leisure opportunities, how we conserve the countryside and how we maintain and manage the park and its' surroundings.

We welcome children of all ages and typically accommodate groups of up to 2 classes. Larger groups can be arranged; however this often means some of the activities being led by the teacher, rather than Rother Valley staff, please talk to us to discuss your requirements.

We hope this pack will help you to prepare a successful programme tailored to suit the needs of your group.

What is a Country Park?

A country park is an area people visit to enjoy recreation in a countryside environment. Most Country Parks date from the 1970s when they were created with the support of the Countryside Commission. Visitors can enjoy a public open space with an informal atmosphere, as opposed to a formal urban park as might be found in a town or city. They are usually found close to or on the edge of built-up areas.

Rother Valley comprises of 300 ha of parkland in a river valley, opening to the public in 1983 after being opencast mined between 1976 and 1982. It includes areas of open water, a river, grassland, woodland as well as footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes.



Contact Information

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Booking a visit

Please contact us to discuss available dates, and then complete the booking form. Please note all our bookings need to be confirmed by email, we do not accept purely telephone/verbal bookings. Once we have received your form it will be entered into our diary and you will receive an email confirming this.

Standard countryside educational visits currently start at £3.50 per pupil. Should you wish to combine your visit with our other facilities on site we are happy to offer combined packages, including watersports, dry side sports, archery and conservation activities such as nest box/bat box building, bulb and tree planting, please call to discuss prices and your requirements.



Schools will normally be invoiced to the address provided on the booking form; otherwise payment should be made at the start of the visit via cheque payable to 'Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council'. A receipt will be given.

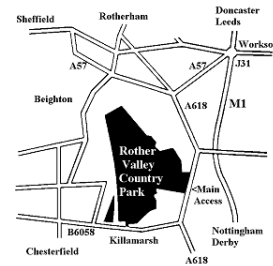
Cancellation arrangements

If you are unable to carry out your visit please let us know as soon as possible so we can make alternative arrangements.

On rare occasions (for example the June 2007 floods, 2001 foot and mouth crisis) the park may be closed at short notice. In such cases we will be happy to re arrange your visit to a mutually convenient date.

How to get there

Rother Valley Country Park is in a prime location 10 miles south of Rotherham and 7 miles east of Sheffield, with its main entrance 2 miles from the M1 Junction 31, just follow the brown Tourist Information signs. Click [here](#) for a detailed map of the area.



On arrival

Educational parties arriving by minibus or coach are not charged for parking, follow the signs for the Watersports Centre where there is parking for cars, minibuses and coaches. Make your way to the education centre to the rear of the green, the gates will be open ready for you.



Facilities

The Education Centre provides space for up to 30 pupils. Male, female and disabled toilet and hand washing facilities are just around the corner in the courtyard (there is a single toilet and sink in the centre itself).

Educational equipment available includes butterfly and pond nets, bug viewers, magnifiers, pooters, binoculars, telescopes, moth trap, pond trays, trundle wheels, clinometers, tally counters, children's spades, bulb planters, maps and compasses, microscope, digital cameras, anemometer, pmr radios, humane mammal trip traps, animal and plant ID keys, as well as class sets of craft materials (crayons, pencils, felt tip pens, paints, stamps etc.).



Supplementary material for activities (plant and animal ID sheets, archive photographs, maps and leaflets) is available on CD-ROM priced at £5-00 and can be photocopied for preparatory or follow up work back at school.

Rother Valley aims to be fully inclusive for all group abilities, the majority of the park is wheelchair accessible with surfaced paths (electric scooters and wheelchair cycles are available from the hire centre), however groups with limited mobility should check in their pre visit that it meets their specific requirement. A ramp is available to the rear of the education centre to improve access.

The parks' café provides both sandwiches and cooked meals. Children's lunch boxes are available, prices on request.

The Watersports and Activity Centre provides a wide range of craft and bikes for hire should you wish to combine recreation and education in your day at Rother Valley.



The Visit

All visits start and end at the Education Centre, you are welcome to leave bags, packed lunches and equipment here during the day.

Sessions generally run 10:00 -12:00 and 12:30-14:30, but can be varied as required. We will ensure you have opportunity for a toilet/hand wash stop before and after sessions. There are no other toilet facilities whilst out in the park.

Pupils are welcome to use the Education Centre to eat their lunches, and picnic benches are provided in the centre garden for eating outside.



We will do our best to deliver the programme as agreed, however in inclement weather conditions it may be necessary to shorten or modify some activities. In such cases we will endeavour to provide similar activities within the education centre.

Evaluation Form

We want your visit to be both enjoyable and appropriate to the needs of your students. By taking a few minutes to complete our evaluation form you will help us to identify what is successful and what we need to develop to make school visits informative.



You can of course email your comments to cseducation@rvcp.co.uk after your visit.

We always welcome comments from the students themselves and any feedback from them are most welcome.

Section 2 The Countryside Classroom

The countryside offers an invaluable teaching resource. This visit can be used to teach many aspects of the curriculum through learning about the environment and the countryside.



We will be regularly updating this teachers' information pack and it would be greatly appreciated if you could let us have copies of worksheets or ideas that you feel have been particularly successful, so that they can be incorporated into our pack if appropriate. If you are reading a paper version of this pack please check www.rvcp.co.uk/Education.aspx for the most current copy.



Learning Opportunities

- Habitats Woodland, grassland, parkland, lakes and ponds, wetland/marsh, field margins, river, flower-rich grassland, and hedgerows.

- Wild plants and animals
Amphibians - frog, toad, newt,
reptiles - grass snake,
mammals - mice, vole, shrew,
squirrel, rabbit, foxes, many
birds specially waterfowl,
grassland flowers including
cowslips and orchids, broad
leaf trees and woodland plant
species.



- Conservation management Hedge laying, grassland management, woodland management, improvement of wildlife habitats. Countryside access, stiles, gates, footpaths, bridleways, waymarking.

- Landscape features Flood plain, ski slope, river, river terraces, hedges, open water, suspension bridge, railway bridges, regulator bridge, visitors centre, watersports and activity building.



- Leisure provision Sailing, canoeing, sailboarding, walking, cycling, orienteering, archery.

- Historical/archaeological features Water Mill and associated buildings.

Links to the National Curriculum

Activities meet a broad range of targets including literacy and mathematics, geography, science, citizenship, art and design, history and PE.

At Key Stage 1 pupils experience a whole variety of sensory situations (colours, shapes, textures, sounds, smells) with plenty of opportunity for language development and literacy skills.

Key Stage 2 activities include problem solving, reasoning and numeracy elements to stimulate and excite pupils, allowing them to apply their knowledge and understanding. They look at the human impact on the environment, conflicts of interest, and communicate their ideas using a wide range of language.

Key Stage 3 visits can fulfil many different subject areas in relation to the country park, its development, social and technological changes in the locality. Researching investigating and debating skills are enhanced, covering a wide range of complex issues in their environmental, economic and social contexts.

Key Stage 4 activities covers both academic, recreational and vocational activities, engaging students with contemporary issues, developing issues relating to their role as users of the country park.

For links to specific units of the National Curriculum see the activities on offer in section 4 of this document.

Section 3 Your Visit

Risk Assessments

We provide specimen risk assessments for each activity offered but it is important that the group leader carries out any risk assessments she/he may feel necessary for the specific group of pupils. A visit by the group leader before the school party arrives is therefore essential.



Code of Practice for Educational Visits

1. The visit must be approved by the Headteacher/Head of Centre and must be confirmed by the return of the official booking form.
2. All children must have parental consent for the visit.
3. All groups must be accompanied by a qualified teacher or other recognised leader.
4. The child/adult ratio specified on the booking form must be adhered to.
5. Other adults accompanying the group must be authorised by the Headteacher/Head of Centre.
6. **During the visit we will act as guide and instructor, but the overall 'loco parentis' responsibility remains with the teacher.**

Before the visit the teacher/group leader is expected to:

7. Complete and return a copy of the official booking form.
8. Arrange a pre-visit.
9. Carry out preparatory work with the group on the theme of the visit.
10. Brief the group on expected codes of behaviour.
11. Ensure that the group arrives appropriately clothed and equipped for the agreed activity and weather - serviceable shoes/boots/wellingtons, waterproofs, inappropriately dressed groups may be turned away (a spare change of clothes is always a good idea when taking a group on a countryside visit!).

During the visit the teacher/group leader is expected to:

12. Keep the group together to ensure that no-one becomes separated or lost. Maintain close visual contact with the group.
13. Be aware of the physical dangers of the countryside including; water hazards, steep banks, traffic and ensure that pupils understand the need to wash hands thoroughly after activities handling plants, minibeasts, water or soil.
14. Be aware that the general public use our sites and should not be disturbed by your group. They may also pose a threat to children that you should be aware of.
15. Assist Rother Valley staff, where agreed or indicated in the topic brief, during the activities.
16. Actively monitor and control the behaviour of the group and take disciplinary action as appropriate.
17. Assist the Rother Valley staff as required in dealing with anyone in the group who falls ill or requires first aid.
18. During the visit, the adult helpers are expected to assist the group leader and Rother Valley staff in all of the above.

During the visit we will:

19. Provide a CRB checked member of staff to lead your group.
20. Deliver the agreed subject content of the session.
21. Provide first aid as required.

Animal Contact Guidelines

Children are not expected to have any physical contact with livestock.

The Countryside Code

5 simple rules -

1. Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs
2. Leave gates and property as you find them
3. Protect plants and animals and take your litter home
4. Keep dogs under close control
5. Consider other people



Section 4 Activities

The six activities listed below represent some of the most popular themes relating to the National Curriculum, particularly Key Stage 1 and 2 (<http://curriculum.qcda.gov.uk/key-stages-1-and-2/index.aspx>). We are happy to create and modify activities to suit you, as discussed during your pre site visit.

Activities and ranger visits to local schools, advice on wildlife areas, pond creation and habitat management can all be arranged, please contact us to discuss your requirements.

1. Mini-Beasts and Pond Dipping.

Half day This activity enables children to examine and observe invertebrate animals closely, using butterfly nets, pooters and pond nets sugar traps and wine ropes. For moths the traps are set up 24 hours before the visit. Groups can either use the intermediate pond (approximately 1.5 Kms from the visitor centre, not usually suitable for those with mobility



problems or wheelchairs) or the newly created wildlife pond in the Education Centre garden, (suitable for all abilities). This activity is particularly suitable for KS1 & 2 pupils and incorporates the following aspects of National Curriculum.

[Science Unit 2B Plants and animals in the local environment](#)

[Science Unit 4B Habitats](#)

[Science Unit 6B Micro-organisms](#)

Objectives: To help pupils recognise that there are different

kinds of plants and animals in the immediate environment
To show pupils how to treat animals and the environment with care and sensitivity
Pupils will observe and make a record of animals and plants found and present results in a table

Outcomes: Pupils will be able to identify some plants and animals
Pupils will be able to identify where they were found
Pupils will produce a record/grid showing their finds
Pupils will use correct names for plants and animals

2. Orienteering – half day/ full day

There is a permanent orienteering course in the park consisting of 4 routes, ranging from 2.5 – 4.8 Kms.
Copies of the maps produced by the British Orienteering Federation and compasses are available on loan from the park. Courses can be tailored for those with mobility issues.



This activity is particularly suitable for KS3&4 students & incorporates the following aspects of National Curriculum

[PE Unit 30 Outdoor and Adventurous Activities \(3\)](#)

The orienteering course can be adapted for use by KS2 pupils using simpler maps available on loan from the park. This activity incorporates the following aspects of National Curriculum.

[PE Unit 19 Outdoor and adventurous Activities: unit 1](#) [PE Unit 20 Outdoor and adventurous Activities: unit 2](#)

Objectives: **KS2**
Pupils use photographs and clues to complete a simple 6 point orienteering course in pairs or groups
Pupils develop and refine orienteering and problem-solving skills when working in groups and on their own.

KS3&4
Students to complete a solo or group orienteering course of between 6-12 controls using map and compass techniques

Students plan, record and submit their proposed route prior to departure
Students prepare (warm up) and wear appropriate clothing for the task
Students record the order in which they visit controls and the time taken in between

Outcomes: **KS2**

Pupils will be able to read a variety of maps and plans accurately, and recognise symbols and features
Pupils will display physical and teamwork skills in a variety of different challenges

KS3&4

Students complete course safely in the expected time
Records of the course completed match the planning
Orienteering and map-reading skills used accurately and confidently
Students cool down appropriately

3. River Studies – Field study of the River Rother and/or the smaller stream Pigeon Bridge Brook: half day/ full day look at different aspects of river development e.g. flow rates, size, shape, volume, water quality, history and water safety.

This activity would be suitable for KS2 pupils and incorporates the following aspects of National Curriculum



[Geography Unit 14 Investigating Rivers](#)

[Geography Unit 19 How and where do we spend our time?](#)

Objectives: Discuss water cycle
Make plans/maps of river
Photograph river features
Measure depth/width/speed of river
Use geographical terms to describe what they have seen e.g. water cycle, rainfall, source, spring, river, stream, hill, slope, steep, mountain, waterfall, valley, channel, lake, mouth, erosion, pollution, landscape
Discuss causes and effects of changes in a river (floods/drought/pollution/human influences)
Discuss differences between pond/lake/sea and river
Look at maps and plans showing source and mouth

Outcomes: Pupils produced a map of route of river
Pupils have photo evidence of river
Pupils use geographical terms to describe what they have seen
Calculations re volume speed of river have been recorded
Pupils have discussed what they think and feel about the river
They have discussed the source and mouth of the River
Rother/Pigeon Bridge Brook

4. Nature Trail – A guided walk

around the Park. Half day The walk is approximately 3 km (90 mins) and visits 4 different habitats for pupils to observe the flora and fauna. The 4 habitats are Wetland, Grassland, Hedgerows and Woodland. This activity is suitable for spring/summertime when there is more wildlife, plants and birds to see, and because of the distance, is more suitable for KS2 pupils.



This activity incorporates the following aspects of National Curriculum

[Science Unit 4B Habitats](#)

[Science Unit 5B Life Cycles](#)

Objectives: Pupils will be introduced to 4 different habitats
Pupils will be shown the differences and similarities in habitats
Pupils will be shown how to record different animals and plants in different habitats using a digital camera
Pupils will be shown simple keys to help identify plants and animals

Outcomes: Pupils are able to identify the 4 different habitats
Pupils are able to recognise animals and plants in different habitats using simple keys
Pupils are able to make reliable observations using scientific vocabulary e.g. organism, nutrition, condition (of ground/soil/light), key, prey, predator

5. Planting seeds Half day This activity introduces the idea that plants grow and change, and provide food for us. As part of the activity it is possible for children to plant seeds/bulbs to take back to school.

They will be able to observe plants growing in the education centre garden (depending upon the time of year).



There are also opportunities for exploring the woodlands in the park identifying types/species of trees and shrubs and discovering why they grow there and fit into the pattern of habitats.

Also if required, there will be opportunities to do some art activities using vegetables and leaves/seeds This activity is suitable for KS1 pupils and KS2 (Y3) incorporating the following aspects of National Curriculum

[Science Unit 1B Growing plants](#)

[Science Unit 2B Plants and animals in the local environment](#)

[Science Unit 3B Helping plants grow well](#)

[Art and Design Unit 1B Investigating materials](#)

[Art and Design Unit 2B Mother Nature Designer](#)

[Art and Design Unit 3B Investigating pattern](#)

- Objectives: To show pupils that there are a many different plants
To show pupils where different plants grow
To show pupils that plants have leaves, stems, flowers, roots and seeds and encourage them to name these appropriately
To show pupils that plants need water and light to grow and show how fast/slow some plants grow
- Outcomes: Pupils will be able to recognise some plants and their differences/similarities
Pupils will understand that plants need water and light to grow
Pupils will be able to tell the difference between a dead plant and an artificial plant

6. Investigating the Past Half day

This activity involves children in the exploration of the history and development of Rother Valley Country Park. The historic buildings on the park range from an early medieval grain mill, the 'New Mill' (circa 1760s), a millers cottage (now a store), the farmhouse (Park office) stables (café), 1960s bungalow



(formerly a residence, now the Education Centre), Craft Centre and toilets block (1980s) and Watersports Building (1990).

Resources available include the old mill machinery, photographs, CD ROM showing the development of the park after opencast mining (1976-1982). The tour also covers the industrial use of the park during the 19th and 20th Century using secondary source material and the development of the park as a recreational and leisure amenity. The activity is suitable for KS2 pupils and would enhance studies about what it was like to live in the Rother Valley in the past, and the use of the park as a leisure amenity, incorporating the following aspects of National Curriculum

[History Unit 18 What was it like to live here in the past](#)

[Geography Unit 19 How and where do we spend our time](#)

Objectives: To introduce pupils to some of the history of the Park
To show pupils the different ranges of buildings, their uses when built and present day use
To help pupils identify the different styles and types of building materials used
To show pupils some archive material referring to the former industrial uses of the site

Outcomes: Pupils are aware of the former uses of the area
Pupils can identify different building materials (old or new)
Pupils have some concept of a time line in the development of the area

7. Conservation Projects Half day

The Education team at Rother Valley Country Park are keen to work in partnership with schools to develop wild spaces/gardens in school grounds, and to advise teachers on aspects of conservation and development of wildlife areas. There are also a number of opportunities at the Park which schools can become involved with in a voluntary capacity e.g. tree and bulb planting, nest



box and bat box building, litter picking, hedge laying and seed collection to start a tree nursery. These activities are run both in and out of school hours (please contact us to discuss costs) and incorporate the following National Curriculum areas

[Science Unit 5B Life Cycles](#)

[Science Unit 3B Helping plants grow well](#)

[Science Unit 2B Plants and animals in the local environment](#)

[Geography Unit 8 Improving the environment](#)

- Objectives: To develop partnerships with schools
To share information about conservation and conservation techniques
To share information about wildlife
To promote the ethos of Rother Valley Country Park
- Outcomes: An increase in the number of schools working in partnership with the Countryside Ranger service

8. Art and the Landscape Half day

This activity will give students the opportunity to study and record the landscape, buildings or human activity on the site either by using traditional methods, sketching/painting or using technology (video/digital photography and sound recording). The activity is suitable for KS2 and KS3 students and incorporates the following National Curriculum areas



Art and design Unit 6A People in Action

Art and design Unit 6C A Sense of place

Art and design Unit 9gen Visiting a museum gallery or site

Objectives: To introduce students to the landscape of Rother Valley Country Park
To assist students with art and design projects based upon the landscape, buildings, and sporting activities which can be seen in the park
To provide facilities for students to observe the landscape and activity in the park

Outcomes: The profile of the park is enhanced as a valuable countryside landscape

If you would like further information or to discuss your requirements further do not hesitate to contact Gareth Horne (0797 1473122) or Iain Willson (07959 5465667). We look forward to hearing from you soon and welcoming your group to Rother Valley Country Park.

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