



'Out of School' Trips Research

A National Report

January 2012



RESEARCH

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Project number: Trism02-5832
Title: National out of school trip report
Location: [Report](#)
Date: January 2012
Report status: Final
Approved by: Kathrin Tennstedt
Authors: Nick How
Comment: Cover image provided by the Science Museum, London



This research has been carried out in compliance with the International standard ISO 20252

I. Executive Summary

Purpose of the research

The core aim of the research is to provide up to date information about the attitudes, behaviours and requirements of school trip organisers helping museums, destinations and attractions to develop their offer and increase their share of this market.

Methodology

A national survey of primary and secondary teachers was conducted online, the survey being 'live' from September to November 2011.

Key findings

Motivations for organising out of school trips

Trip organisers universally agree (97%) that out of school trips provide students with unique and memorable learning experiences.

Classroom technology which provides virtual experiences is not currently seen as a replacement for an actual visit; only 8% agree there is less need now to actually leave the classroom.

The vast majority of out of school visits are solely or very much directly curriculum focussed (85% of all trips undertaken by Primary schools and 75% for Secondary); for these providers there is a need to clearly demonstrate the educational value they offer.

Factors influencing where to visit

The key factors when deciding where to go on out of school is to have the opportunity to have unique and memorable experiences that are unavailable in the classroom (81% rated this as important), along with student enjoyment (81%), followed by cost (78%) and quality of venue staff to engage students (76%).

The three key sources of information used to find out about places to visit on out of school trips are all from personal experiences (previous visit by school 86%, word of mouth/recommendation 80%, previous visit by myself 76%), followed by websites (46%) and mailshots (37%).

Awareness amongst trip organisers of the *Learning Outside the Classroom* accreditation appears to be low (only 31% being aware of it), with only 13% of all respondents saying it currently has an influence on where they choose to visit.

Planning an out of school trip

Day trips are often planned more than a term in advance (60% 3 months or more before going), with much longer lead times for residential trips (73% organise 9 or more months in advance).

There is no consensus on the ideal time for providers to communicate to schools about their school trip offer, with 29% saying anytime throughout the year, 27% at the end of the academic year in June / July and 24% at the start of the academic year in September.

The internet has an important role when organising out of school trips, primarily to find information on places to visit / things to do (50% always, 49% sometimes), complete visit admin including risk assessments (45% / 43%) and download teaching materials and resources prior to a visit (35% / 61%), rather than to book the visit itself (15% / 70%).

A typical trip

Most trips undertaken are day visits (88% Primary and 81% Secondary), followed by UK based overnight / residential visits (12% for both) and overseas (1% Primary, 7% Secondary).

The top 5 types of places visited on an out of school trip were Museums (68%), Countryside (56%), Place of worship (49%), Activity Centre (46%) and Theatre (40%).

A typical Primary school day visit involves 30 students (mode) travelling 1-2 hours to their destination (64%).

A typical Secondary school day visit involves 40 students (mode) travelling 1-2 hours to their destination (62%).

The average spending money trip organisers recommend students take on a visit to a museum or art gallery is £2.76 for Primary and £7.45 for Secondary schools, providing a potential source of additional revenue for providers.

Attracting more school groups

Respondents provided a number of factors which they felt helped make a school trip successful, along with advice to providers about what they want from them, these are shown in the body of the report and should give many useful insights to check your offer against.

2. Introduction

As a leading research provider for museums, visitor attractions and destinations across the UK, Qa Research is pleased to present the findings of our national research amongst teachers who undertake 'out of school trips'.

This report aims to present the industry with a range of information from the perspective of school trip organisers to help providers better understand their needs and ultimately increase their share of this market.

This report follows on from a previous industry wide report about education group visits produced by Qa in 2008. The aim of this research was not to repeat the previous survey but to add to the knowledge and understanding of this market gained from the previous research.

3. Aims and objectives

The over-riding aim of the research was to:

- Provide up to date information for providers about the attitudes, behaviours and requirements of teachers who organise out of school trips

The specific objectives of the research were to:

- Profile teachers who organise out of school trips
- Understand teachers attitudes towards organising out of school trips and their requirements from providers
- Determine the type of trips undertaken and level of secondary spend
- Understand the planning process and why specific providers are selected
- Measure the effectiveness and impact of different information sources
- Capture levels of internet usage and understand its role when organising out of school trips
- Measure the awareness and impact of the Learning Outside the Classroom accreditation.

4. Methodology & sample

An online survey, designed by the research team at Qa was hosted on our server, with many of the question areas being suggested by clients within the sector who we have previously worked with.

The online survey was ‘live’ from mid September to the start of November 2011.

An email invitation with a web-link to the survey was sent out to teacher contacts held by Qa, as well as a number of attractions who offered to send this out to teachers on their contact databases. In addition the survey was publicised in e-newsletters sent out by clients to their group bookers, along with other organisations who put the information and a link to the survey on relevant pages of their websites.

We would like to thank all those who helped circulate the survey on our behalf.

Those completing the survey were also asked to forward the survey link on to other teachers.

Participation in the research was encouraged by entry into a prize draw.

A screener question ensured that all respondents actually organise or undertake out of school trips with students.

In total 324 respondents completed the survey providing a sample which in research terms means we can be 95% confident that the data at an overall level has a variance of no more than +/-5.4%.

5. Key findings

The key findings from the research are shown overleaf.

Please note that when interpreting results throughout this report not all percentages will equal 100% due to rounding (with any figures of 0.5 or higher being rounded up).

Some questions were multiple response questions: respondents had the option of giving more than one response. These percentages may be higher than 100%. The overall findings throughout the report are based on a total sample of 324 respondents unless otherwise stated.

The analysis of the results was run using Askia software. All questions have been cross-tabulated against the following variables with any relevant statistically significant differences which emerge being commented upon:

- Primary compared to Secondary schools
- State compared to Private schools

Cross tabulations revealing differences between these variables that reach statistical significance are reported after the relevant question. Only category names alongside their proportions have been reported in a standard format.

For example, regarding the importance of the Learning Outside the Classroom accreditation when choosing places to visit, amongst those who were aware of it:

Nett important (very or quite):

- Secondary (68%) - Primary (38%)

This tells us that the accreditation, amongst those aware of it, is significantly more important as a factor for those working in Secondary than Primary schools, with 68% of all those who were aware of the accreditation from the Secondary sector rating this as an important factor when choosing where to visit compared to 38% of all those from the Primary sector who gave the same answer.

Some questions were open ended with no pre-defined responses. The answers given have been reviewed, with the common themes emerging being reported back on using a selection of verbatim comments to illustrate the opinions and attitudes held.

We have included comment boxes throughout the report separating out the factual findings from our interpretation of the data and suggestions of what the findings might mean for out of school trip providers.

5.1 Profile of respondents

Teachers from a broad spread of different school types, key stages taught and positions of responsibility took part in the research.

School type participating in the research

Type of school	Count	Percentage
Nursery/pre-school	10	3%
State Primary	177	55%
Primary Independent / Private	17	5%
State Secondary	64	20%
Secondary Independent / Private	16	5%
Tertiary	6	2%
Other	34	10%
Base	324	

Those stating 'other' work in special schools (15 respondents), pupil referral units (6), as home educators (4), schools with different age bands (e.g. middle schools 4), Catholic schools (2) and other (2).

Key stages taught

Key Stage(s) involved with	Count	Percentage
KS1	179	55%
KS2	198	61%
KS3	90	28%
KS4	95	30%
Post-16 / KS5	68	21%
Base	324	

Current position / job title

Current position	Count	Percentage
Head Teacher	67	21%
Deputy Head	17	5%
Senior Teacher	27	8%
Head of Department	42	13%
Subject / Classroom Teacher	77	24%
Administrator	56	17%
Other	38	12%
Base	324	

Those stating 'other' included Teaching Assistants (10 respondents), Education Group Co-ordinators/organisers (5), School Business Manager (4) and Home Educators (4).

Comment:

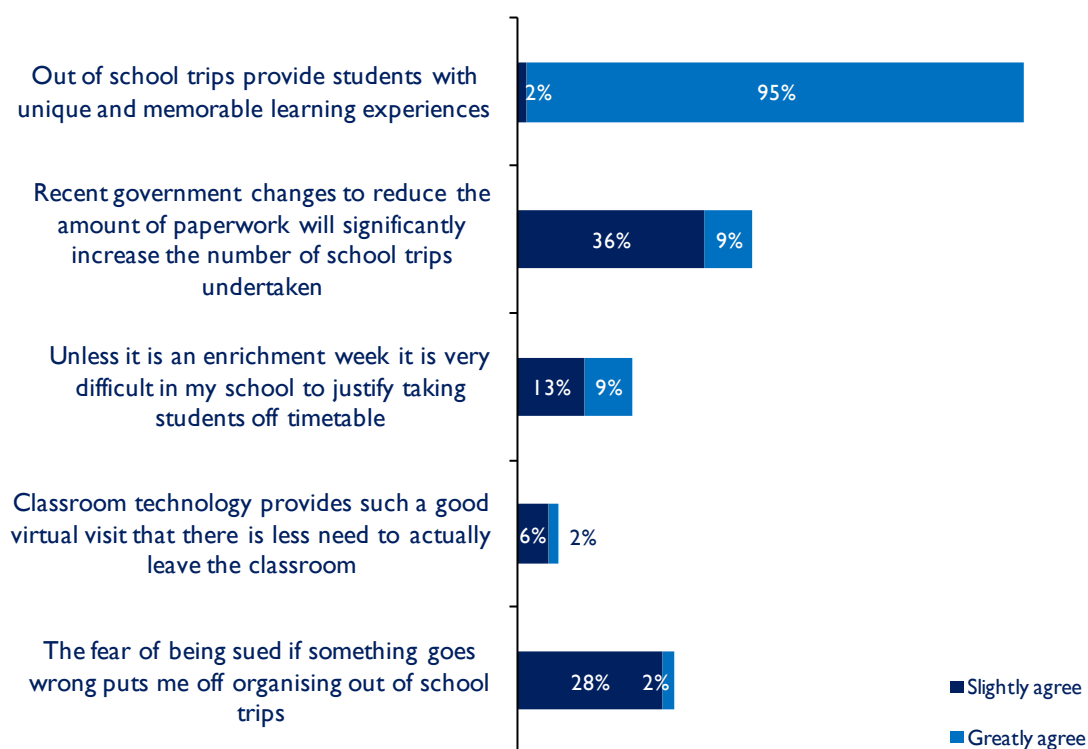
The range of different positions within a school responsible for organising out of school trips highlights the difficulty of trying to target potential trip organisers by mailing marketing materials to generic job titles.

5.2 Attitudes towards out of school trips

Amongst those who organise out of school trips there is an almost universal acceptance that they provide unique and memorable learning experiences; therefore providers should highlight in their marketing and promotions specific examples of the experiences they can offer students that cannot be replicated in the classroom (or elsewhere).

Virtual experiences have not yet taken over from going outside the classroom to experience the 'real thing'.

Q32. Attitudes about out of school trips



Source: Qa Research 2012 Base: 324



Unless it is an enrichment week it is very difficult in my school to justify taking students off timetable – greatly agree

- *Secondary 26% - Primary 3%*

There is a positive attitude, at least amongst those organising school trips currently that making it less arduous to organise them is likely to see an increase in the numbers being organised.

There are a fifth of schools (22%) whose teachers struggle to take students out of the classroom on out of school trips during 'normal' teaching times, therefore being able to demonstrate the educational value from visiting is likely to help these teachers make a persuasive argument to those within the school management who decide if a trip can take place.

Somewhat surprisingly, given those answering the question had actually organised school trips in the last year, almost a third are wary about being sued if anything goes wrong. This suggests any reassurance and evidence of high standards of health and safety from providers is likely to be well received.

5.3 Profile of school trips undertaken

Number of out of school trips undertaken

Respondents were asked how many out of school trips they had been involved in organising (i.e. making decisions about where to go, what to do and planning the trip) in the academic year 2010-2011.

The mean number of trips for Primary schools was 8.2 (ranging between 1 and 40), with the largest number being organised by a Head teacher.

The mode (most frequently cited number) was 3 (given by 12% of all respondents working in the Primary sector).

The mean number for Secondary schools was 13.4 (ranging between 1 and 200, the highest number given by an Administrator) with the mode being 2 (given by 14% of all respondents working in the Secondary sector, followed by 1, 13% and 3 trips, also 13%).

The mode suggests most trip organisers organise only a small number of trips each year.

Curriculum versus non curriculum based trips

From the number of trips organised respondents were asked how many of these were solely or very much directly curriculum / education based and how many were non-curriculum based or had a broader focus.

43% of both Primary and Secondary schools organised out of school trips in which all trips undertaken were directly related to the curriculum.

For Primary schools, out of the total number of school trips organised in the last year 85% were solely or very much curriculum based.

The figure for Secondary schools was 75% of all the trips undertaken were solely or very much curriculum based.

The figures in the table are based on the ratio of curriculum and non-curriculum based trips and clearly shows the majority of out of school trips are undertaken because they relate to the curriculum.

Proportion of curriculum versus non-curriculum based trips		
	Primary	Secondary
100% curriculum based	43%	43%
At least 90% curriculum based	52%	46%
At least 80% curriculum based	69%	54%
At least 75% curriculum based	77%	60%
At least 60% curriculum based	85%	68%
At least 50% curriculum based	92%	74%
At least 25% curriculum based	94%	80%
Less than 25% curriculum based	5%	19%
Base:	194	80

Breakdown of different types of out of school trips

Based on the number of trips organised, respondents were asked how many were UK day trips, UK overnight trips and overseas trips.

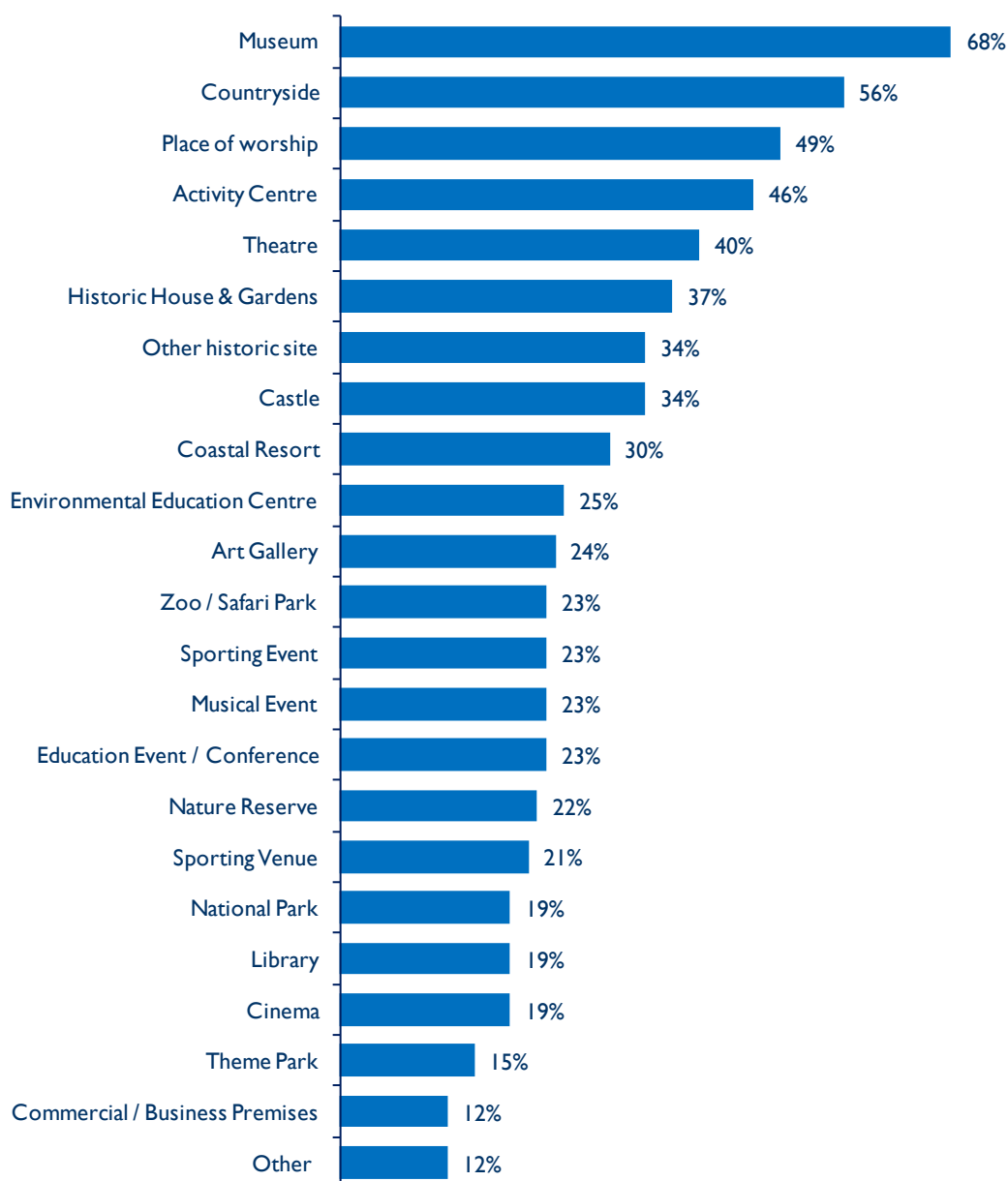
The table below shows the proportion of trips split by Primary and Secondary sectors.

Proportion of trips organised		
	Primary	Secondary
Day trips	88%	81%
UK based overnight / residential	12%	12%
Overseas	1%	7%
Base:	194	80

Types of places visited

Respondents were given a prompted list and asked to select from the list which places they had visited in the last 12 months on an out of school trip.

Q10. Types of places visited in last 12 months



Source: Qa Research 2012 Base: 324



Primary schools were more likely than Secondary schools to visit the following places:

Museum

- *Primary 73% - Secondary 56%*

Countryside

- *Primary 58% - Secondary 41%*

Place of worship:

- *Primary 58% - Secondary 28%*

Activity Centre:

- *Primary 52% - Secondary 30%*

Historic House & Gardens:

- *Primary 42% - Secondary 21%*

Environmental Education Centre:

- *Primary 25% - Secondary 14%*

Art Gallery:

- *Primary 24% - Secondary 13%*

Sporting Event:

- *Primary 28% - Secondary 13%*

Musical Event:

- *Primary 26% - Secondary 14%*

Nature Reserve:

- *Primary 25% - Secondary 6%*

Library:

- *Primary 21% - Secondary 9%*

Whilst Secondary schools were more likely to visit:

Educational Event Conference

- *Secondary 39% - Primary 14%*
- *Private 36% - State 19%*

Theme Park:

- *Secondary 23% - Primary 8%*

5.4 A typical day trip

The questions about day trips were only asked of those who had organised such an out of school trip in the last 12 months.

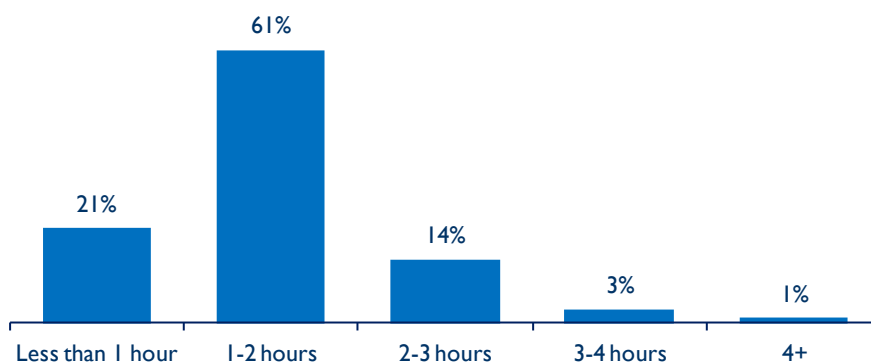
Group size

Amongst Primary schools the mean number of pupils / students on a typical out of school day trip is 40.79 (mode 30 given by 41% of respondents) and 42.71 for Secondary schools (mode 40 given by 16% of all respondents).

Drive times

Respondents were given a range of options and asked to select the maximum drive time, one way, they were willing to travel on a typical out of school day trip.

Q14. Maximum drive time, one way, for typical day trip



Source: Qa Research 2012 Base: 296

Less than one hour:

- Primary 24% - Secondary 6%
- State 21% - Private 7%

Spending money

The breakdown and mean figures for the average amount of spending money trip organisers recommend their students take on day trips to different types of places is shown below, with the first table showing the findings from the Primary sector and the second the amounts from the Secondary sector:

Average amount of spending money recommend <u>Primary</u> school pupils / students take on a day trip to			
	Museum / Gallery	Theme Park / Zoo	Countryside / Outdoors
£0	25%	23%	50%
up to £3.99	34%	19%	16%
£4-£5	24%	22%	12%
£5.01-£10	3%	6%	3%
£10.01+	1%	1%	0%
Can't say	13%	29%	19%
Mean	£2.76	£3.17	£1.47
Base: 180			

Average amount of spending money recommend <u>Secondary</u> school pupils / students take on a day trip to			
	Museum / Gallery	Theme Park / Zoo	Countryside / Outdoors
£0	0%	0%	3%
up to £3.99	1%	0%	1%
£4-£5	28%	13%	23%
£5.01-£10	16%	17%	6%
£10.01+	3%	3%	0%
Can't say	52%	67%	67%
Mean	£7.45	£9.13	£5.26
Base: 69			

Therefore, although the actual amount varies considerably between different schools, the average level of secondary spend at a museum or gallery from a school trip from the Secondary school sector (based on the mean number of students taken on a typical out of school trip (42.71) multiplied by the typical amount of spending money recommended they take by trip organisers (7.45)) is **£318.19**.

5.5 Typical UK based overnight / residential trip

The questions about UK based overnight or residential trips were only asked of those who had organised such an out of school trip in the last 12 months.

Group size

Amongst Primary schools the mean number of pupils / students taken on a typical residential or overnight trip is 38.79 (mode 30 cited by 30% of all respondents) and 29.77 for Secondary schools (mode 40 given by 23% of all respondents).

Duration of trip

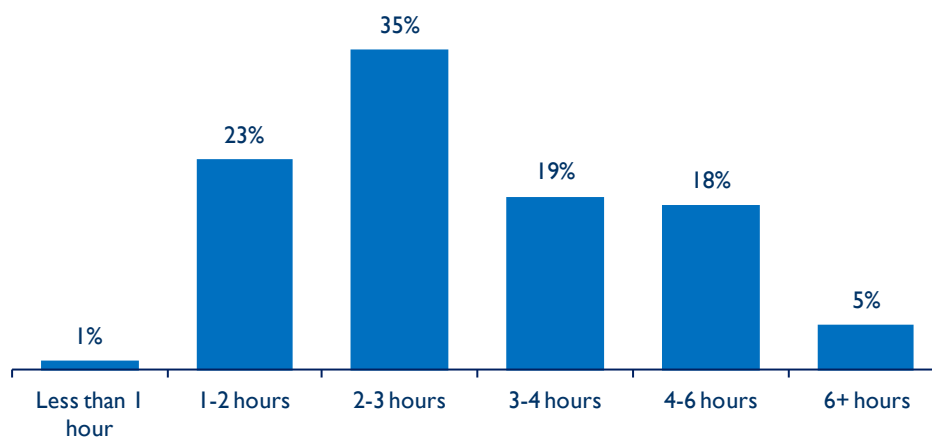
Trip organisers were asked what the average duration in days was of a typical UK based out of school overnight trip that they had undertaken in the last 12 months.

The mean number of nights away was 3.71 days for Primary schools and 3.14 days for Secondary.

Drive times

Respondents were given a range of options and asked to select the maximum drive time, one way, they were willing to travel on a typical residential or overnight out of school trip.

Q14. Maximum drive time, one way, prepared to travel on a residential or overnight trip to get to your destination



Source: Qa Research 2012 Base: 168

4-6 hours:

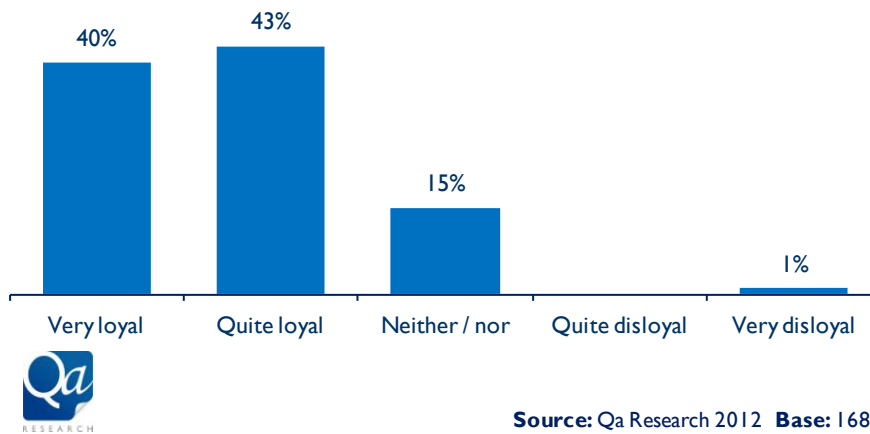
- Secondary 31% - Primary 11%



Loyalty to providers

Those organising residential / overnight trips were asked the extent they were loyal to using the same provider that they had previously used.

Q23. How loyal are you using the same provider previously used when planning and booking a residential



Comment:

The findings suggest incumbent providers are in a strong position to capture future business, so new providers will have to work hard to persuade organisers of the value and benefit of switching from what and who they already know works well.

This also highlights the important value in delivering high levels of satisfaction and also in keeping in touch with group organisers who have previously booked to benefit from the expected repeat business.

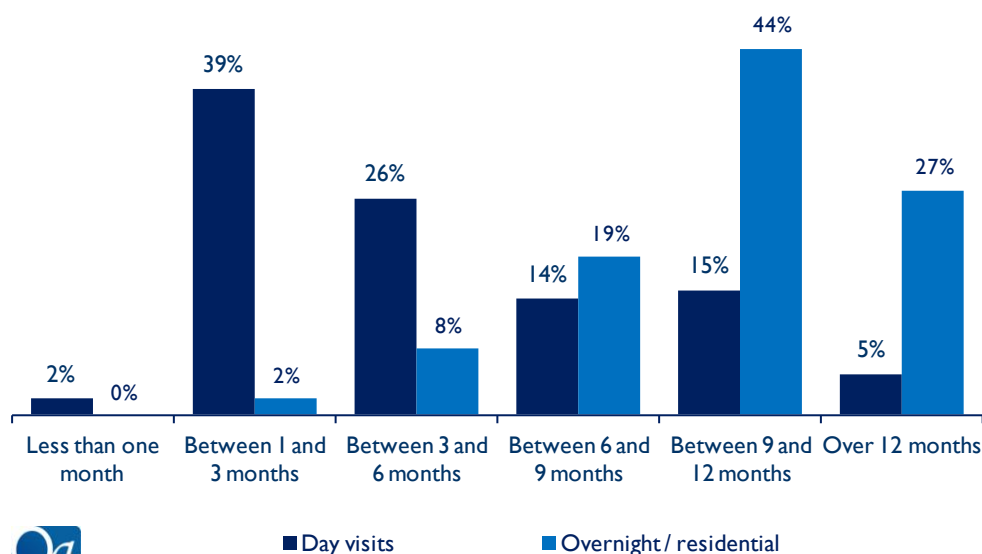
5.6 Decision making and planning

When start planning a visit

Those undertaking day trips and UK based overnight residential trips were asked, typically how far ahead do they start thinking about and planning their out of school trips.

The findings for both questions are shown in the same chart below.

Q18/22. Typically how far in advance start thinking about and planning trip



Source: Qa Research 2012 Base: 296 day / 168 overnight

Perhaps understandably given the time for students to save for many overnight trips the planning process for most (71%) trip organisers is at least 9 months in advance of going.

Day trip planning: between 1-3 months

- Primary 43% - Secondary 23%

Residential planning: between 6-9 months

- Secondary 31% - Primary 11%

Residential planning: over 12 months

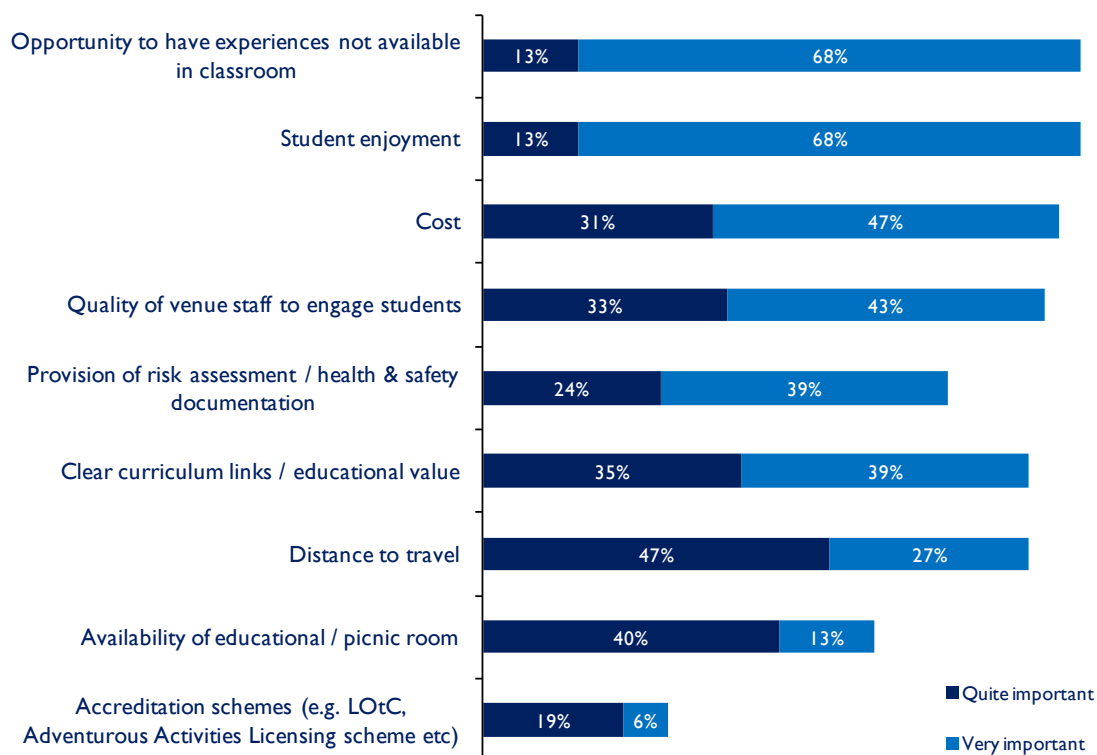
- Primary 35% - Secondary 11%

Factors influencing decision of where to go

Trip organisers were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being ‘not important’ and 5 being ‘very important’) the importance of various factors in helping decide where to go on an out of school trip.

The chart below shows those who rated the factor as ‘very important’ and ‘important’, ranked in order from most to least, based on those saying ‘very important’.

Q28. Importance of factors when deciding where to go on an out of school trip



Source: Qa Research 2012 Base: 324

Provision of risk assessment / health and safety documentation, nett important

- Primary 68% - Secondary 54%

Clear curriculum links, nett important

- Primary 78% - Secondary 65%

Availability of educational / picnic room, nett important

- Primary 64% - Secondary 35%
- State 57% - Private 42%

Comment:

As previously seen in organisers' attitudes to out of school trips, having unique and memorable experiences are of prime importance when deciding if and where to go. Providers should look to develop these and communicate them in relevant marketing materials.

A unique experience may simply be an opportunity to see, or touch or do something not available in the classroom.

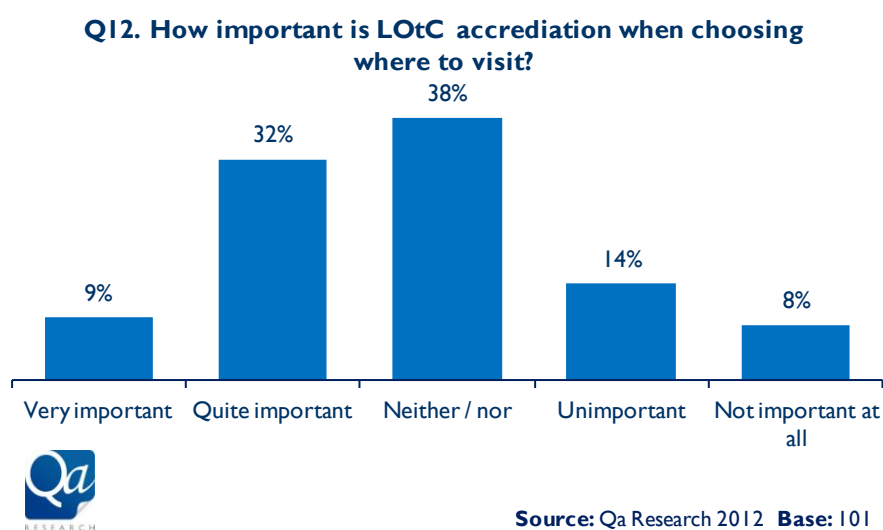
Awareness and impact of the 'Learning Outside the Classroom' accreditation

31% were aware of the 'Learning Outside the Classroom' accreditation, with 62% saying 'no' and another 6% answering 'don't know'.

Awareness, yes:

- Primary 34% - Secondary 24%
- State 33% - Private 18%

Those who were aware of the quality marque were asked how important the accreditation was when choosing which places to visit on an out of school trip.



Amongst those who were aware of this accreditation it was deemed more important amongst respondents working in the Secondary sector.

Very/quite important:

- Secondary 68% - Primary 38%

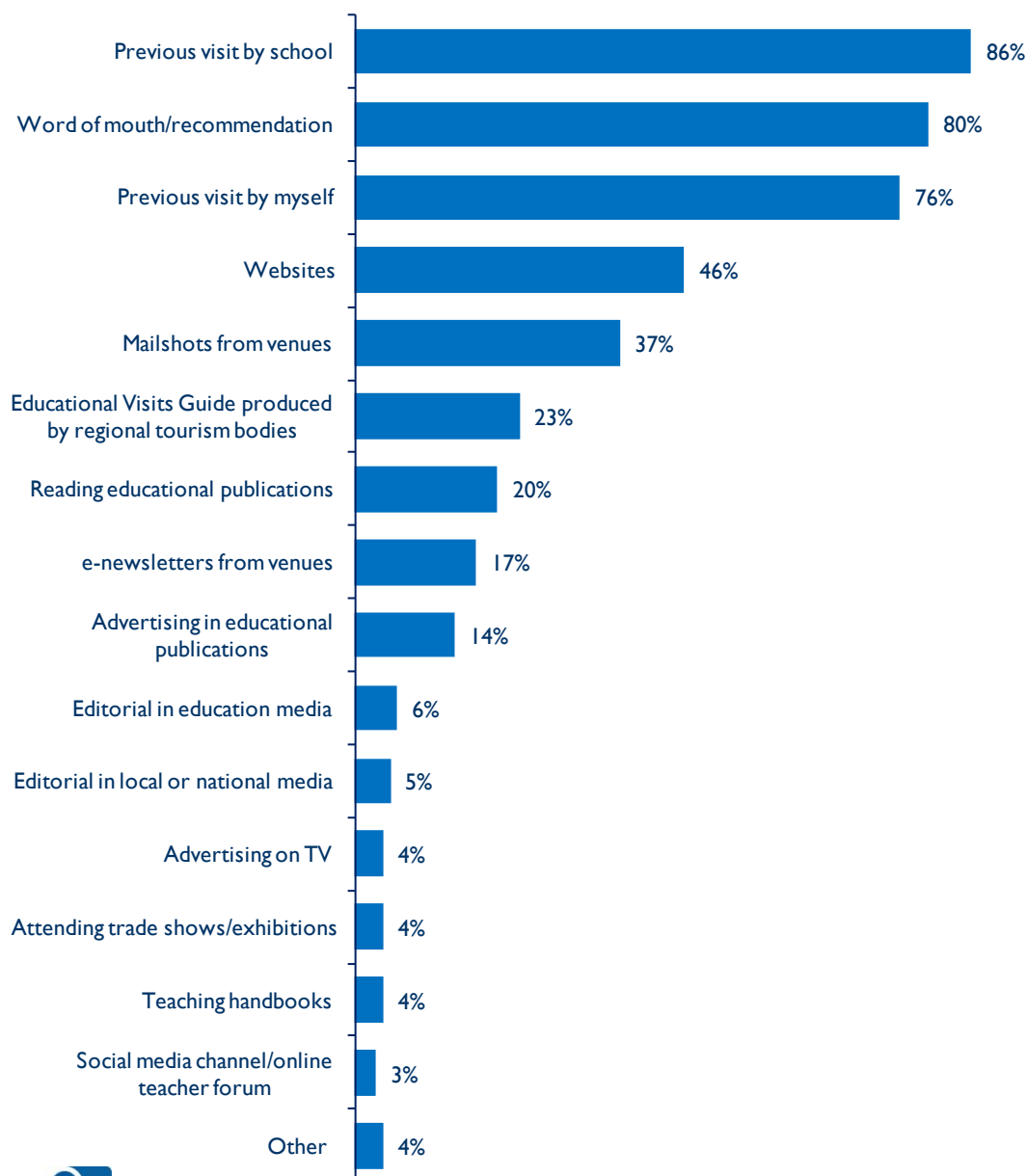
However, out of all those surveyed the Learning Outside the Classroom accreditation only has a positive influence (i.e. very or quite important) on determining where 13% of school trip organisers choose to visit (with no difference between Primary and Secondary sectors).

5.7 Sources of information

Information sources used

The chart below shows the usage of different information sources used to find out about places to visit on an out of school trip.

Q24. How find out about places to visit on out of school trips



Source: Qa Research 2012 Base: 324

Google was the most common website referenced, followed by specific sites (e.g. English Heritage, National Trust, individual venues) and the TES online.

The most common education publications mentioned was the TES followed by Teaching History.



Previous visit by school:

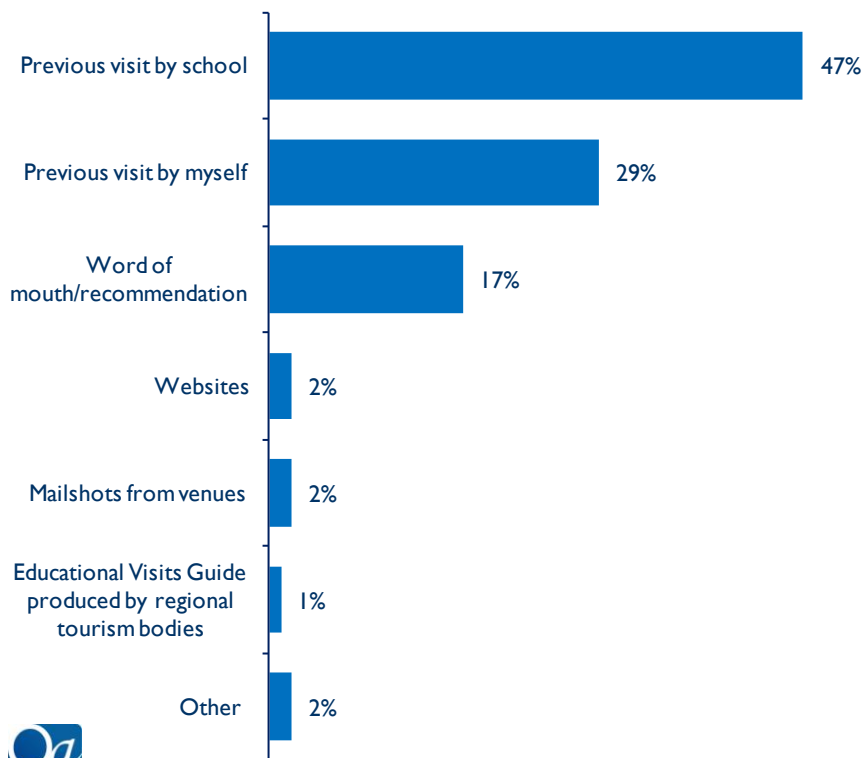
- *Primary 92% - Secondary 81%*

Educational Visits Guide produced by regional tourism bodies:

- *Primary 25% - Secondary 14%*

Trip organisers were then asked about the ones they had selected, which information source they considered to be the most influential.

Q25. Most influential source of information



Source: Qa Research 2012 Base: 324

Previous visit by school:

- *Primary 57% - Secondary 34%*

Previous visit by myself:

- *Secondary 43% - Primary 23%*

Comment:

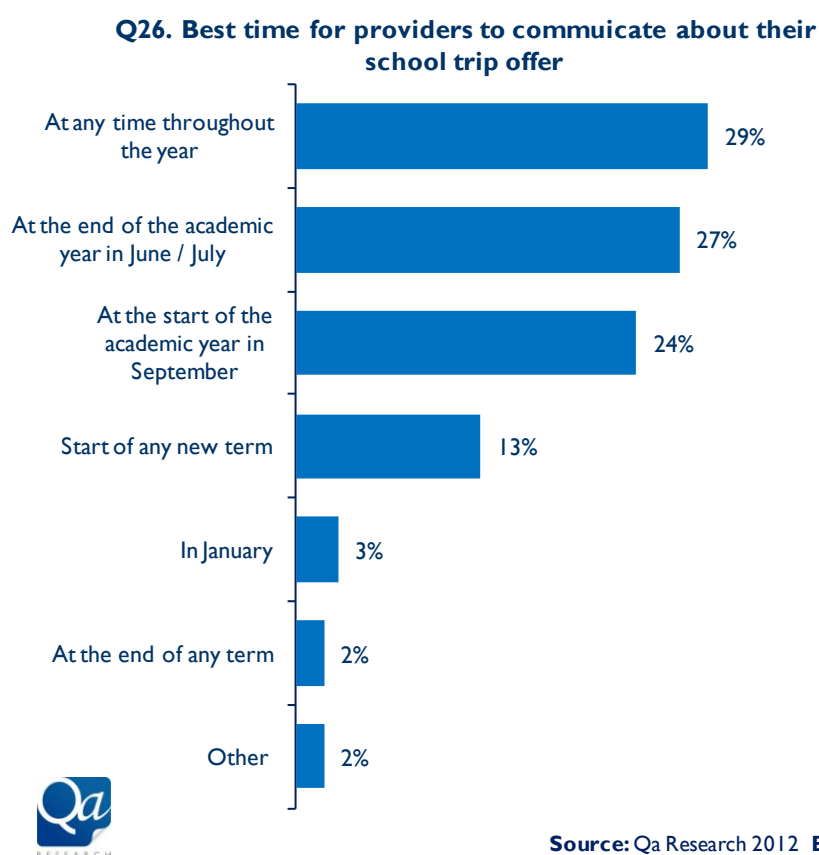
The hierarchy of information sources is the same as the findings from our previous research into out of school trips undertaken in 2008. Then previous visits (as a single category) was the most influential (64%), followed by word of mouth / recommendations (25%), mailshots and websites (both 4%).

As trip organisers rely heavily on their own experience or those of their peers and friends, it is vital everyone in an attraction from the education team through to the receptionist and maintenance staff understand the important role they play in providing a positive visit.

Exploring ways to benefit from proactive recommendations is likely to have more impact than traditional marketing campaigns.

When best to send marketing materials

Trip organisers were given a list of options and asked when was the best time for providers to communicate to them about their school trip offer.



Those saying ‘other’ suggested very specific times relevant to their own planning (e.g. *May/June as we have to request permission for trips in the summer term before the year concerned*).

There were no statistically significant differences between Primary and Secondary sectors.

Comment:

The findings highlight the difficulty of selecting a single appropriate time to send out any marketing communications.

Ideally if resources permit, data should be captured from previous bookers and enquirers as to the best time to send them marketing information so at least they can be sent an email when they are most receptive (even if print runs and costs will not enable hard copies to be distributed at different times throughout the year).

Usage of the internet

Those organising out of school trips were asked to what extent they used the internet to undertake a range of different functions.

The findings have been ranked in order of highest to lowest based on those saying 'always'.

Extent use internet for ... when organising out of school trips			
	Always	Sometimes	Never
Find information on places to visit / things to do	50%	49%	2%
Completing visit admin including risk assessments	45%	43%	12%
Download teaching materials & resources to use prior to a visit	35%	61%	4%
Compare a variety of venues	33%	55%	12%
Download teaching materials and resources to use post visit	25%	62%	13%
Order a guide / brochure	23%	61%	16%
Book a visit	15%	70%	15%

Base: 324

Downloading teaching materials & resources prior to a visit, always:

- Primary 41% - Secondary 26%

Since our previous research amongst out of school trip organisers in 2008 there has been a significant rise in the use of the internet for:

- Completing visit admin, 20% 'always' and 33% 'never' in 2008
- Downloading resources prior to a visit, 25% 'always' and 10% 'never' in 2008
- Compare a variety of venues, 26% 'always' and 24% 'never' in 2008
- Book a visit, 9% 'always' and 34% 'never' in 2008

Comment:

Even though trip organisers often still desire to do things like booking via other channels, providers' websites clearly have a role for some trip organisers and need to offer a range of functionality. Using the internet is only likely to grow in importance.

Other education research Qa has conducted showed that trip organisers, despite being happy to book tickets online for themselves, want the reassurance of knowing they have booked the right elements for any out of school trip by doing this face to face (along with being able to ask additional questions of the venue at the same time).

5.8 Actual experiences

What makes a successful out of school trip

Trip organisers were asked in an open ended question, thinking about the best out of school trip they had been on, what one thing made it so successful.

A number of different elements were cited which we have grouped together into common recurring themes below. The comments in italics are direct quotes from trip organisers.

Outcomes related based on what students learnt

For some success was based on the outcomes for students, either from them gaining educational knowledge and skills relevant to their studies or valuable social or personal lessons, both of which are unlikely to be acquired without getting outside the classroom.

The educational value is important for many trip organisers to demonstrate as a pre-requisite for choosing to visit a particular venue.

“Quality of learning experience outside of the classroom”

“All pupils engaged and learning from an opportunity I could not provide in the classroom”

“Students being fully engaged”

“Engagement of our children. If the trip is stimulating, interesting and fun then our children learn and remember”

“Variety of experience offered that could not be offered in school”

Level of enjoyment for students

Out of school trips are meant to be fun and enjoyable which was reflected in many comments from trip organisers, something providers should remember when planning activities and schedules.

“Different, exciting experiences which engage the children and staff that were enthusiastic and knowledgeable”

“Children being involved in activities and not just sat listening to somebody speak”

“Balance of information and hands on experience”

“The enjoyment on the students faces, the sheer delight at being given the opportunity to experience something that they would not normally have”

“Students taking part in an activity that they have never done before”

The need for planning, preparation and organisation

A successful out of school trip can be down to preparation and planning. Although trip organisers largely take the credit for doing this themselves there is a role for providers in assisting them by providing information and any other help required.

“Excellent organisation which led to a stress free enjoyable day for everyone”

“Centre staff communicating with myself and being able to have a pre-visit”

“A focussed objective of the trip, a trip for a reason rather than out on a jolly”

“Having been on a pre-visit for myself so it was easier to organise and less stressful on the day”

“The organisation put on before hand to make sure that it was engaging and enjoyable”

“Planning ahead and knowing what to expect at the venue”

“Detailed planning”

Good team from school

Organisers recognise the benefit and value of having a supportive team of teachers on a trip.

“Thorough planning and a good team”

Quality of staff at the venue

Staff at a venue who can engage and inspire the students / pupils can make a visit, contributing hugely to student enjoyment and the amount they learn. The quality of the teaching staff at a venue is determined by how knowledgeable, engaging, empathetic and flexible they are to the needs of specific groups.

“Really well trained staff who were knowledgeable about their venue and could run the session, this gives children a totally different experience from school and means that teachers can absorb what the children are experiencing and so produce better quality post-visit experiences for the children”

“Enthusiasm and knowledge of learning education staff at site to make session interesting and fun”

“Good educational practitioner engaged the children”

“Provision for and understanding of the needs of pupils with special needs”

“Very practical and real, with staff completely tuned in to the individual children”

“Excellent venue staff who accommodated students/group needs and were engaging and enthusiastic about their venue”

“Staff who show a genuine interest in the children and can adapt to the needs of the group”

“Children enjoyed learning - and didn't realise they were! Good facilitators with clear curriculum focus”

Benefits of going on an out of school trip

Those organising out of school trips were asked for a single word which to them would sum up the key benefit to their students / pupils of going on such a visit.

The word cloud below¹ shows the reasons given. The cloud gives greater prominence to words that appear more frequently (e.g. the top three most cited words were 23% who said the key benefit was that it provided 'experience(s)', 11% 'enjoyment or 'enjoyable' and 8% 'enrichment or enriching'.

All the words given demonstrate a clear positive sense of the developmental, social and educational benefits that an out of school trip can provide.



Comment:

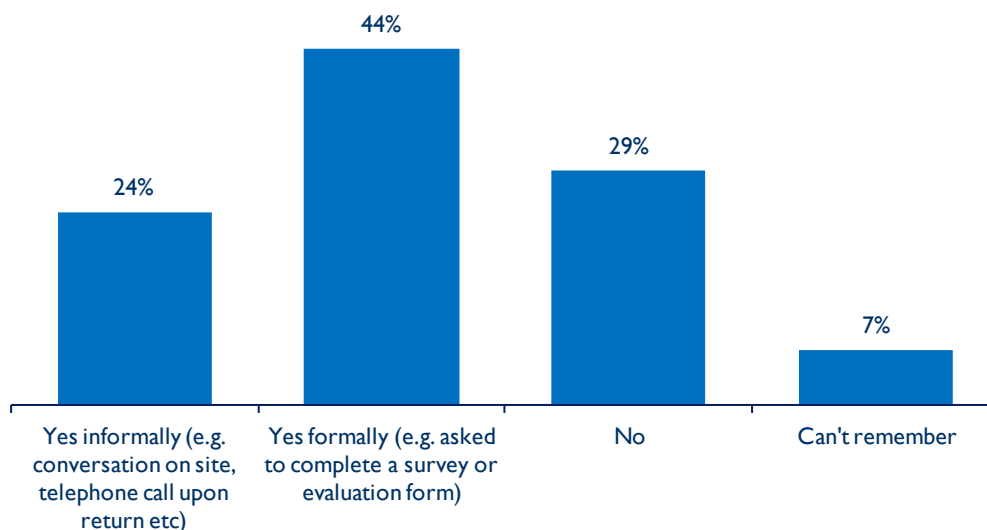
The words given resonate strongly with the recurring desire for out of school trips to provide memorable and unique experiences that are unavailable in the classroom, which students enjoy and therefore learn from.

¹ created using www.wordle.net

Feedback

Based on the last out of school trip organisers had gone on they were asked if anyone from the venue had asked for their opinion or feedback about their experience.

Q30. Did anyone from the venue visited ask for your opinion or feedback about your experience?



Source: Qa Research 2012 Base: 324

Comment:

Collecting and acting on feedback provides several benefits and therefore should be utilised.

Capturing feedback from trip organisers and even the students themselves, be it formal or informal, should provide useful free intelligence to help further develop the education product on offer or identify issues to address.

It should also create an opportunity to build strong relationships and make schools feel that their opinions, comments and business is important and welcome.

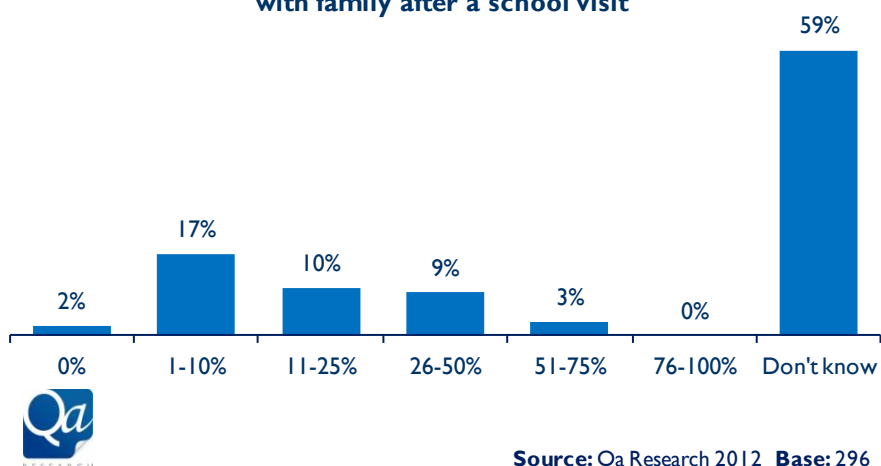
Estimated return visits with family

Although only an estimate, respondents were asked what percentage of students did they think revisited a venue with their family after a school visit?

Clearly many did not know or could not guess but those who provided an answer tended to suggest a relatively low proportion.



Q17. Percentage of students estimated to revisit venue with family after a school visit

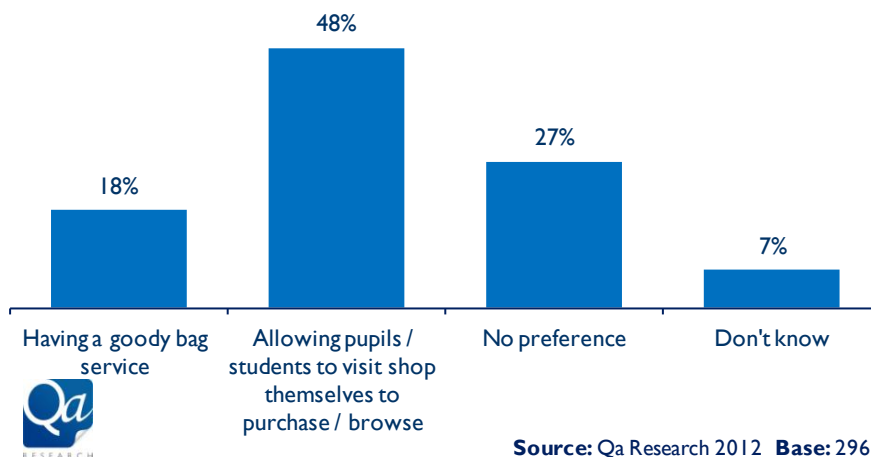


5.9 What want from providers

Goody bags versus visiting the shop

Respondents were given a range of options regarding the visitor shop and asked which they would prefer when visiting an attraction on an out of school trip.

Q16. Preference for goody bag or visit venue shop?



Goody bag service:

- Primary 24% - Secondary 4%

Allowing students to visit shop themselves:

- Secondary 61% - Primary 44%

Advice for trip organisers

The suggestions below are from the answers to an open ended question asking what advice trip organisers had for destinations, attractions and other providers about how they could enhance an out of school trip or better help teachers who are organising them.

Respondents were not short of suggestions!

The common recurring themes have been grouped together, with the quotes in italics showing the verbatim comments and suggestions given.

Be understanding of and flexible to the needs of trip organisers

Trip organisers want providers to be empathetic and understand the challenges they sometimes face when organising a visit.

“Flexibility to meet individual school party needs - guides, health and safety, appreciation of our timescales and itinerary, toilet facilities”

“Consider the key aims of the trip from the teachers point of view - sometimes it's the social and enrichment experience rather than the educational content so inspiring pupils is a big part of trips. Being enthusiastic and engaging all pupils is vital. Connecting the 'why' of the learning to the real world and life experiences is also valuable”

“Online booking arrangements and risk assessments make life a lot easier when organising trips. Staff available on arrival to ensure a smooth entry which saves students becoming unsettled. Facilities available for lunch and breaks especially in inclement weather”

“Please answer the phone or ring us back promptly if we leave a message. This is very frustrating when you are trying to organise a week of visits!”

“Be as organised as possible but also be prepared to be flexible”

“Appreciate school constraints - a cheque cannot be produced overnight. Accept numbers may change on the day”

Offer pre-visits and fam trips

These are seen by many trip organisers as crucial in helping them plan and organise an effective visit. Are teachers always aware of the opportunity and offer from many providers for them to do this?

“Make booking easy and to offer pre-visits for teachers”

“Invite teachers to come before the trip”

“Free visits for teachers and their families to plan visits”

“Have a teachers day or evening first to get to know the venue and exhibits”

“Offer a free pre-visit with the chance to talk to staff who maybe running activities”

Tailoring the visit to the needs of the group

Trip organisers appreciate providers who take time to discuss their needs and wants so any visit can be better tailored to the needs of the group; this includes learning outcomes as well as recognising and adapting the offer to the types of students who may be visiting.

“Ask about syllabus requirements”

“Flexibility, understanding that not all students/schools are the same and have the same needs”

“Discussion in advance concerning particular needs, and bearing in mind that each group is different!”

“Ask what teachers want to happen on their trip, have lots of suggestions for the staff when planning it”

“Talk to the school prior to visit”

“It's always useful to be able to talk to staff about areas of the curriculum which we need to address”

“Ask what the requirements for the visit are in terms of educational value, i.e. what does the teacher want and what can they supply to the students and staff”

Assistance with paperwork and resources often appreciated

Many teachers are time pressured with organising a trip being in addition to their normal workload so any assistance with paperwork or providing educational resources to enhance the learning experiences which saves having to do this all themselves is welcomed.

“Make it clear what activities are available. Have electronic risk assessments available that can be sent to the organising teacher. Always ensure that they meet a coach arriving on their site. Keep costs down - perhaps offer discounts to attract the children's families back to the venue”

“Well prepared risk assessments”

“Working HARD to support teachers with resources, organisation and coordination etc. Providing Risk Assessment support and resources. In the current climate offering EXCEPTIONAL VALUE is vital also”

“Materials available in a format that the teacher can modify for the needs of their group, a bank of materials for the teacher to create a document”

“Good risk assessment to limit workload”

“Keep prices low and have prepared risk assessments to help teachers complete theirs”

“Send information packs containing everything from risk assessments to curriculum links, maps, etc direct to schools”

Good contact before visiting

Trip organisers want to know they can easily get in touch with providers so any questions can be easily answered; having a good relationship with someone in the attraction or venue provides additional reassurance that the provider is interested in their business and will therefore do all they can to make the trip successful.

“A named contact who is happy to communicate with you over any queries”

“Talk to schools - we are very unique in how we take children out on expeditions-one size fits few!”

“Identify a key person for us to liaise with”

“Have someone available on a phone that can be spoken to”

“Keep the costings down! Provide risk assessments etc. Named person as point of contact”

Keep the costs down

Costs are a key factor when deciding if to undertake an out of school trip, although travel costs often comprise a large proportion of the overall cost anything providers can do to keep costs to a minimum is likely to be welcomed by trip organisers.

“Keep costs to a minimum. Provide risk assessments. Clarify explicit links to curriculum. Offer free teacher places and pre-visits”

“Keep costs as low as possible ... develop add ons to the attraction....e.g. theatre performance plus theatre workshop/q&a with the actors/ members of the technical staff”

“Keep prices as low as possible”

“Get the costs down to the minimum, schools have less money this year than before and that's going to get even less in coming years”

“Keep the cost low and make it interesting and fun”

“Keep the prices as low as possible for group bookings”

Have appropriate activities and attitudes

Being able to offer exciting, memorable and unique experiences, pitched at the right level is one of the key reasons schools undertake out of school trips.

“Make sure that the timings and rooms for activities are well organised, the staff at the venue must be able to interact well with pupils and be enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Provide something for school staff e.g. tea, coffee or a chance to have a break”

“Provide workshops for children and employ workshops leaders that have experience working with children. Provide experiences that the children couldn't get in a class based environment due to lack of space, teacher time, teacher experience, school budgets etc”

“Consider the whole experience - parking, cloakroom, toilets, lunch area and provide clear pre-visit info on the format of the day including those aspects. Keep it interesting, active and hands-on - if it's only stuff we could deliver in the classroom ourselves, what's the point? There has to be added value”

“Give children experiences that inspire creativity and make visits memorable (trying on clothes, artefacts, re-enacting roles etc)”

“Be flexible to the needs of the school. Provide something the children will be able to talk about for a long time into the future and be well organised in delivering the service”

“Staff on site who know the venue and can do or offer something that the teacher/classroom/school cannot”

Having staff who are flexible, understand and enjoy working with school groups can make a huge difference to the success as students tend to be more engaged during a visit.

“Have a Plan B!”

“Focus on the specific requirements of the teachers; be flexible. Be prepared to accommodate wishes of teachers. Be tolerant of teenagers!”

“Smile - enjoy children”

“Get the right staff for the job!!”

“Be enthusiastic and upbeat. Know how to engage the children (knowledge of age group)”

“Be welcoming and treat parties as paying customers, not nuisances”

Learn from feedback

Asking for feedback and being open to act on the comments and opinions of those visiting is seen as a good way for providers to improve their school visit offer.

“Evaluation forms help, if all schools filled them in then the providers would know what was and was not working and alter things accordingly”

“Listen to feedback”

“Send a programme to teachers in advance and respond to comments”

“Respond to evaluations, act on them!”

6. Recommendations

Use the findings in the report to critically evaluate your offer against the needs and wants of those organising out of school trips; are you doing all you can to satisfy the desires of trip organisers?

Providers should be asking teachers about what makes a successful visit and shape their product and marketing accordingly.

Although the majority of trips undertaken are linked to the curriculum it is still important to trip organisers that students have an enjoyable as well as enriching experience.

Review your product offer to ensure you are providing memorable and unique experience which are unavailable in the classroom, differentiating from your competitors and that these are communicated in your marketing materials.

Administrative help pre-visit is likely to be appreciated but the actual experiences students have on the visit itself will create a much stronger impression; it is these that should be the first aspects to be evaluated to ensure all the potential opportunities are being optimised.

Ensure the education pages on your website are easy to find and provide the key functions desired by trip organisers, whilst also giving alternative ways to contact the venue and book.

Be as flexible as possible to match the needs of schools and their students; trip organisers do not expect a bespoke programme but desire a discussion beforehand and a degree of tailoring to reflect the group they are bringing.

With the wide range of different job titles that are organising trips and the variation as to when the best time to receive any information is or when they start to plan a trip, having good CRM software and capturing useful data should help any marketing activity be less of a shotgun approach.

With the importance of personal experience and recommendations from others when choosing where to visit, ensure that all staff understand the important role they play in providing a positive experience.

Consider offering free familiarisation trips to teachers (especially if they can visit in the school holidays or weekends with their family) as this is likely to position the venue in a positive light as well as helping teachers experience the venue first hand.

Explore if there are any opportunity to work with trip organisers who have a history of visiting who may be happy to act as a voice for you when in contact with other schools.

Regularly talk to trip organisers, value their opinions and take their advice and feedback on board.

Remember the small things can often make a difference such as meeting and greeting coaches to welcome schools and orientate them or making teachers a cup of tea or coffee when appropriate.

7. About Qa Research

Providing an independent view, our research has helped provide destination and visitor attraction managers and other tourism professionals with a greater understanding of their market, products and service.

Qa Research has a dedicated tourism team that provides destinations, attractions and other tourism bodies with qualitative and quantitative research that enables them to:

- Gain market share
- Test new products or refine existing ones
- Increase customer satisfaction levels
- Attract non-visitors
- Strengthen funding bids
- Target hard to reach groups
- Measure the effectiveness of marketing campaigns
- Develop or refine brand identities
- Understand perceptions and awareness of their products
- Produce sustainable tourism policies and plans

Our tourism team undertakes research with visitors, non-visitors and stakeholders that allows destinations and attractions to make informed decisions.

Our core research services include:

- Online surveys
- Face-to-face surveying
- In-depth interviews
- Self-completion surveys
- Telephone research (using our in-house specialist contact centre)
- Focus groups
- Workshops
- Desk research

For more information about Qa Research including a list of recent clients and examples of research projects recently conducted please look on our website www.qaresearch.co.uk

To discuss any research needs please contact: Nick How on 01904 632039 or email nick.how@qaresearch.co.uk

