

Introduction

The Great Cressingham Victorian School programme has been developed for Key Stage 2. It covers a cross curriculum experience of learning enrichment.

Key Stage 2 - Victorian Britain.

Background

Great Cressingham National School was built on Church Glebe Land in 1840.

The school had approximately 100 children in two classrooms in 1870.

The school continued to be used by children until 1992 when it was closed by the Norfolk Education Committee.

In 1993 Sally and Tom North bought the building from the Church and restored it as closely as possible to its Victorian style and original colours i.e. a brown dado so dirt would not show and lighter walls above to reflect light. They installed a fine Tortoise Stove which is used for heating the school and hung a beautiful oil lamp which gives a warm but dim light on dark days.

The room is furnished in a style reminiscent of the Victorian classrooms with original pairs of desks, teachers' desk, ink wells, blackboards, maps, and many specimens of natural history. There is also a harmonium which is used for hymn singing.

The walk to the school from the bus set down by the church passes a fine knapped flint wall, a Victorian farmhouse and Victorian cottages..

Typical Session

A visit lasts about three and a quarter hours.

Walk from the bus to school (about 200 metres on pavement)

Boys and girls line up in height order and receive instructions and slate rags for classroom.

Boys walk into The Schoolroom, followed by the girls..

Please let me know beforehand if any children have wheelchairs, or particular learning difficulties that might effect the visit.

Prayers and hymns are part of the experience and Victorian songs are sung to the harmonium or melodeon.

Hand Inspection

Writing using slates and slate pencils

Hymn and Victorian song practice with Harmonium or Melodeon

Arithmetic -Tables- 2 times up to 12 times

Reading with Victorian reading books

Desk drill (exercises standing at their desks)

Object lesson (the examination of an object e.g. many natural history specimens.
kestrel, stoat, pigeon, pike, long eared bat etc)
Geography or history
Prayer

The session may change according to the year groups and the seasons of the year and time available.

After the hour spent in The Classroom there is time for the children to play with the many reproduction Victorian toys both inside in the museum and outside in the meadow and playground.

Following playtime the children have the opportunity to visit the toilets and wash their hands in cold running water with carbolic soap before eating their lunch.

After lunch the boys and girls have a 20 minute session apart. The girls sew or mend and prepare sampler designs. The boys either do a quiz sheet or draw in a drawing book.

The final 30 minutes is spent back in the classroom.
A moral tale
Writing practice using dip pens, ink and copy sheets
Presentation of Certificates
Final prayer

Children then line up and leave the school to walk back down the pavement to their coach

Preparation for your Visit

Great Cressingham is usually visited as part of a study of Victorian England. It can usefully be incorporated into other studies.

There should be a certain amount of preparation for children to obtain the maximum benefit from their visit.

Were schools different?
What were schools like before Queen Victoria's reign?
How did poor children in the countryside live in Victorian Times?
How did their families earn a daily wage in Victorian Times?

Work beforehand:

Handwriting practice
Discuss suitable behaviour in The Schoolroom
Discuss the differences between Victorian life and today's.
Discuss possible reasons for these differences

Clothing

In winter the school will be considerably colder than a modern school. It is essential to wear warm clothes underneath any costume.

The children who came to Great Cressingham National School were poor. They would not have worn smart clothes.

Girls - Girls should wear their hair off their faces, long hair plaited. Wear plain ribbons. Knee length socks, calf length skirts if possible, and long or short sleeved blouses, or plain dark dresses.

Boys - Boys should tuck dark trousers into knee length plain dark socks. Wear plain dark shoes, or trainers. Plain long-sleeved shirts. Waistcoats if they have them, neckerchiefs, and caps – these can be borrowed if necessary.

Accompanying Adults - Women - Suitable white or dark blouse and longish dark skirt, thick tights, dark flat shoes. Hair fastened up and off the face. Shawls and hats can be worn. Men - More difficult! Plain dark trousers, white shirt, collar up, silk scarf tied as a cravat, waistcoat, dark jacket, dark shoes.

Victorian Behaviour

It is important for the children to realise that for role play to be effective, they must all enter into the spirit of the lessons.

Children should be seen and not heard.

They should address the school mistress as "Ma'am" " and curtsey or doff their cap when wishing her a good morning or good afternoon.

They should sit with their hands behind their backs when they are not working.

They must at all times be obedient.

Children will not be allowed to leave the room under normal circumstances while lessons are in progress.

They should stand and sit with shoulders back and chins up.

They must have clean hands and shoes .

Playground

Coats will be needed except in hot weather

Teachers must ensure that the behaviour of their children is appropriate while in the playground. Boys and girls play separately. An adult must always supervise children in the Museum

Victorian Lunch

A piece of cheese, a piece of bread, perhaps a raw carrot or an apple, wrapped in a piece of cotton cloth, and even a piece of cake. Water is provided in a tin mug. A useful exercise in rubbish could be made here - very little rubbish in Victorian times and I appreciate it being taken away at the end of the visit.