

Learning Outside the Classroom

From the roots to the present

Exploring living spirituality in Durham and Lindisfarne
St Chad's College, Durham University, Lindisfarne and Durham Cathedral

What are we trying to achieve?

To enrich the experience of our GCSE Religious Studies group:

- through encountering spirituality: historically, through the spiritual roots of Christian faith in Lindisfarne and Durham; in the present, through the contemporary experience of Christians and Muslims working in this area today
- by deepening the collaboration and understanding within the group through the shared experience of a residential trip.
- to give students a taste of university atmosphere.

Cost:

The total cost to students was £100 for three days. St Chad's College charged £30 per person per day for full board including packed lunches. The school minibus was used for transport. There were miscellaneous modest entrance charges.

Who is involved?

Fifteen year 10 students with a male and female teacher. We were also assisted by the Christian chaplain at St Chad's College, a Muslim youth worker from Middlesbrough and staff at other venues we visited.

Preparation:

The pre-trip briefing included liaising with St Chad's over practical issues such as timings and room allocation and also about students' dietary and medical needs. We planned our visit to the cathedral to ensure relevant topics were included. It was very useful to have prior contact with the college chaplain who was able to plan a joint session with a Muslim colleague. Careful timing is needed for a visit to Lindisfarne as the road to Holy Island is covered by water across high tide. Tide times are readily accessible from Northumberland County Council (see below) and adherence to this ensures safe and anxiety-free transit!

How did we organise the learning?

We organised a three day residential, staying in St Chad's student accommodation. To give students a feel of the spiritual roots of Christianity in the region, we included visits to Durham Cathedral and a full day at Lindisfarne. We prepared help sheets and investigation tasks for the Lindisfarne experience. An interactive half day session was run on interfaith activity and spirituality today. We also included some leisure and shopping time for students!

What was the impact of the experience?

Although we have run many RE visits, this was the first residential trip we had attempted. It did enrich the experience and relationships of the group and there were some creative and positive reactions. Students valued the time they had together and the different way of exploring religion and spirituality 'in the field' rather than just in a classroom. 'It was great to have time away and see some real places', one commented.

Follow up:

We had timed this visit to be at the beginning of university summer vacation, but also after the year 10 modular exam. It therefore provided an interactive and first hand experience of Christian and Muslim spirituality as a foundation for their second year unit. According to the teachers, the trip was an important contribution to students' education. 'Although a residential involves a lot of planning, I felt it was well worthwhile. It deepened our students' experience and awareness of spirituality and enriched their studies and relationships.'

Contacts and links:

St Chad's College: <http://www.dur.ac.uk/StChads>

Durham Cathedral: www.durhamcathedral.co.uk

Holy Island centre: <http://www.lindisfarne-centre.com/>

Holy Island tides: <http://www.northumberlandlife.org/holy-island/>