

Residential Blog – By Mr. Handy (ILTT Trainee 2017/18)

Out on the choppy waters of Carsington Reservoir, stood atop a paddleboard that threatened to tip over with every wave, striking the oar into the cold lake as rain peppered the surface, I remember grinning gleefully at the sense of freedom; if I were a child, how much more amazing this would be!

The ILTT 2017/18 Residential began on a typical autumnal morning through the peak district. Our collective carpool themed the journey to the world of Harry Potter (National Curriculum – Art) – stopping off at the Three Broomsticks before a few flying lessons at Matlock’s Quidditch (football) pitch. Given the added challenge of performing our own Carpool Karaoke (Chesney Hawkes’ “I Am The One And Only” (National Curriculum - Music), the day began with fun, laughter and that never went away.

We met as a collective, outside Carsington’s Visitor Centre, heading toward the bird viewing station to hit the National Curriculum subject of the day – Science.

The walk to the station had us looking at the flora along the way, identifying trees from a ‘Spotter’s Guide’, then watching, eagle-eyed, from behind the glass, out over the waters, at the birds that made their home at the reservoir. Mingling with the group, there were a variety of hands-on activities in the station that asked questions, gave information and highlighted the importance of the environment. Not a bad when it’s available for free.

Moving on, we returned to the centre and met our Guide for the morning (Diane). An avid believer that all learning can be achieved outside the classroom, we were taken to outdoor learning environment – logs around a campfire in the middle of a small copse – and given the mission: find mini-beasts. Diane spoke us through resources that can be used (plastic spoons, poundland washing up bowls), a few ground rules (respect the creatures and their habitats) then let us go.

For the next half an hour, prospective teacher trainees and their tutors scrambled through the undergrowth in search of the elusive beasts (no idea how the spider we caught escaped the container...).

Diane collected us back together and led us into the idea of keys and categorisation – giving children the ability to identify what they have caught and why it is classified as it is: legs? Shell? Antennae?

Deepening this learning, we dipped into the pond and found a plethora of other life to ogle at. In such a simple area, we were able to take the theoretical approach to science and apply it in a far more practical (and fun) way that made the session much more memorable. Using an indoor classroom to draw the creatures (National Curriculum – Art) then acting out our creature for others to guess.

After a quick lunch (burger in the café), we were taken to the leisure centre for an afternoon of open water paddleboarding (solo or as a croup), canoeing and rowing - check the differentiation. National Curriculum box ticked – P.E. What school can boast onsite opportunity for an activity like this?

We were being shown, as teachers we need to be brave; responsible and considerate in our choices, children rely on us to help broaden their horizons. Can we say that we do that solely within the confines... of the working walls and beautiful displays that line their classes? Let’s get out of the comfort zone once in a while.

Dried, warmer and en-route to Ilam, the landscape transformed from brickwork and man-made structures to the hills and valleys of the countryside. A subtle, yet powerful learning point of the world around us. Here comes the National Curriculum – Geography.

At the hostel, we set about exploring the area around in hopes of planning a quick activity based on the local area (National Curriculum – History) and found the church, gallery and information centre. Our group chose to look at the river and played a game of Pooh Sticks to get others thinking about forces and how rivers are formed.

Post-dinner, we shared our themed journeys and carpool karaoke videos then went outside to celebrate Diwali with sparklers (here comes the National Curriculum again – R.E.). Making shapes and writing names in the air, we shared the silence and enjoyed the lights.

The remainder of the evening was filled with games, comradery and laughter (so much laughter my sides hurt).

Day 2 sent us off in search of map points and puzzles (National Curriculum – Maths, English, Science, Geography, P.E., Art and Design) with an orienteering task. As teams, we assigned roles and used maps to find key features that gave us clues to where markers were. Back to the hostel to answer the questions, and be the first to finish.

To finish off the trip, we made the quick excursion to Dovedale and got a class photo on the stepping stones over the river.

Our focus for the trip lay in the mindset of a child: How can learning happen outside the classroom? The techniques used? The objectives covered? The resources needed? How can it be made safe?

What we took away was that these questions can be answered easily. More importantly, we learned that we had a tremendous amount of fun and took away so much – our pupils can have that manifold.

We bonded closer as peers and it is these opportunities we can offer our children.

ILTT Residential of 2017/18 was incredible. The trip leaders did a fantastic job in balancing learning with enjoyment. Next year's cohort have a lot to look forward to.

