

**Try SEN Magazine  
for FREE**



## Inclusive attractions

*Trizia Wells offers ten top tips to help you select an inclusive venue for your school trip*

Last year's school trip may seem like a distant memory but it won't be long before staff are planning their pupils' excursions for the year ahead.

Like a gleam of light during the dark days of winter, the school trip is eagerly awaited by the children, but often dreaded by their teachers. Whether it's a visit to a theme park, a farm, a museum or a stately home, the planning and organisation involved in ensuring a successful day can be enough to deter any teacher. There are risk assessments, staff ratios, volunteer parents, budgets and photo permissions. On top of all that, a teacher whose class has additional needs has also to consider accessibility. How can they ensure that Jade, who has behavioural difficulties, will enjoy the day as much as Shane, who uses a walking frame? What about Poppy, who needs one-to-one personal care? All of a sudden, organising the trip just took on the dimensions of a military campaign.

While it's the law that disabled visitors should enjoy equal access to leisure, as any parent or carer of a disabled child knows, true inclusion is about attitude more than anything else. A physical environment may still present challenges, but a "how can I help?" attitude from a visitor destination can go a long way towards redressing them.

How can you tell if a chosen destination has a can do attitude? Try these top ten tips and find a school trip destination that is memorable for all the right reasons.

### 1. Information

There are many sources of information for the customer, including review websites, destination websites, promotional literature and adverts. Remember that information should travel in both directions along the superhighway! How can a destination meet the needs of your group if they haven't taken the trouble to find out what they are? So, take note of how your telephone or email enquiry is handled.

### 2. Access champion

Ask to speak to the access or inclusion manager. They should ask questions about the range of needs within your group and what you would like to get out of the day. They'll know what's on offer within the setting and suggest alternatives and adaptations if necessary. Ask for the name of a person you can contact on the day with any problems.

### 3. **Training**

Ask about training for front of house staff. It's the people you meet on the day that you'll be relying on to make sure things go smoothly. What will they do if one of your children has a meltdown? Check review sites to find out if destinations lived up to their promises.

### 4. **Representation of disability**

Look at the organisation's print, digital, online and film media. How are people with disabilities and SEN portrayed? Has the organisation worked with SEN and disabled communities on joint projects? An organisation which takes a proactive approach to working with disabled groups will also welcome them as customers.

### 5. **Chill out!**

Increasingly, attractions offer ways of managing over stimulating environments, from offering ear defenders to chill out rooms. If your chosen destination doesn't have a dedicated quiet space, ask the inclusion manager if there are other areas you can take a child to in the middle of a meltdown.

### 6. **Changing facilities**

Are there any? You can check online listings of changing facilities to see if the destination or a facility nearby is included, and check the destination website for details. If you're still in the dark, ask staff at the venue for a photograph of facilities and exterior access. Appropriate changing facilities mean you can spend as long as you like at your destination.

### 7. **Eating**

Look for photographs of your lunch space; ask the inclusion manager to send you some if necessary. Can the furniture be moved to accommodate wheelchairs? Are there other spaces where you can eat your packed lunch?

### 8. **Feedback**

Let the trip destination know how your visit went; they will want to know what they're doing right and where there is room for improvement. There are many trip review websites online which are great for finding out what other visitors thought, and you can help by sharing your experience afterwards.

### 9. **Preparation**

Discuss the visit with your class. If the destination doesn't have a visual destination guide, ask the venue to send you photographs of the different areas so that the children are familiar with the environment before they go. Talk about the journey there and back.

### 10. **Extra activities**

Visitor attractions often run additional events. Ask if any of these will take place during your visit and if your children can participate, even if they are older than the intended audience? Their response to such a query will tell you a great deal about how the destination views their customers with disabilities and SEN.

An organisation which ticks the first three boxes on this list is one that wants to meet the needs of their customers with special needs and disabilities. They may not have all the answers, but they'll be willing to explore solutions and they'll welcome suggestions; after all, they'll be benefiting from insider knowledge.

So, if you're a teacher whose class includes a child with SEN or disabilities, keep these top ten tips in mind when you begin researching your school trips for 2017. You'll be well on the way to organising a memorable day out which is enjoyed by every child in your group, while saving yourself a whole lot of stress too.

### **Further information**

Trizia Wells, a former teacher, is the Inclusion Manager at Eureka! The National Children's Museum, which welcomes over 30,000 school visitors every year:  
[www.eureka.org.uk](http://www.eureka.org.uk)

[Joomla SEF URLs by Artio](#)

Copyright © 2016 SEN Magazine. All Rights Reserved.  
[Joomla!](#) is Free Software released under the [GNU General Public License](#).