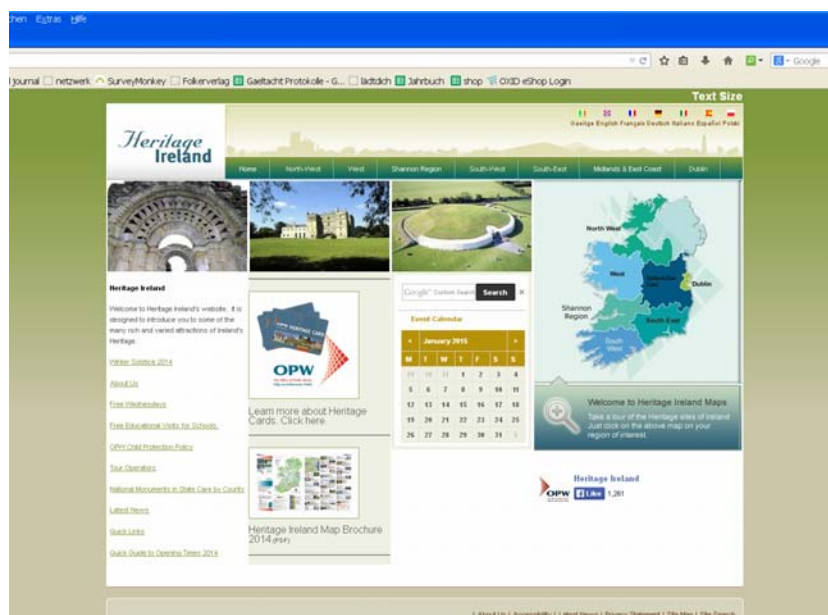


# Free Educational Visits for Schools Scheme

Heritage Ireland (Stand: 5.1.2015)

<http://www.heritageireland.ie/en/Info/AboutUs/>



The Office of Public Works has responsibility for the day-to-day running of all National Monuments and National Historic Properties (i.e. those in State ownership or guardianship). It has a conservation remit to maintain the built heritage in State care and an active role in facilitating presentation and public access

OPW Heritage Services consists of:-

- National Monuments Service
- Historic Properties Service and
- Visitors Service

The OPW's responsibility for this built heritage involves:-

- managing, maintaining and and preserving over 740 national monuments covering a diverse range from the Neolithic Newgrange, the Early Christian Glendalough to the iconic Kilmainham Gaol.
- managing a range of Historic Properties which include over 20 Houses, Parks and Gardens such as the Phoenix Park – celebrating its 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012; the Blasket Centre in Kerry commemorating the Blasket Islanders and their unique literary heritage; or the beautiful old world style Altamont Gardens in Laois.
- providing full interpretative facilities and a full guide service at 70 sites which attracted over 3.4 million visitors in 2011.

The OPW Approach and Philosophy:

The approach of the OPW Heritage Services is essentially conservation oriented with the bulk of resources dedicated to this end. The vast majority of properties in State care are presented to the public without specific visitor facilities such as a guide service. Public access, however, to heritage attractions has a high priority and much effort has been made to improve access and information at all built heritage sites.

Many millions of Irish people and foreign visitors visit the heritage sites each year to learn something of Ireland's history and heritage. Guide services, interpretive displays and many publications and newsletters are provided to assist the visitor in this educational process.

## **General**

**Under the terms of the Free Educational Visits for Schools Scheme, certain qualifying school/educational visits are permitted free of charge provided certain conditions are met. These conditions are set out below.**

### **Eligibility**

1. This Scheme is generally available to school groups of either Primary or Second-Level pupils, as well as pupils attending special needs schools or special needs classes.

2. The Scheme is **not** available to the following groups or organisations:

- Tour and Coach operators;
- Organisations for teaching English as a Foreign Language / Language Schools;
- Any third party individual or Company charging for their services to organise activities, events or guided tours for educational groups;
- Colleges of Further and Higher Education, Universities, extra-mural courses, day / evening classes;
- Study holidays, summer courses, summer schools and lecture tours.

### **Conditions**

3. The following conditions will apply strictly to the operation of the Free Educational Visits for Schools Scheme:

3.1 **The visit must be booked directly with the site** a minimum of 21 days in advance and **must** be confirmed no later than 24 hours prior to the visit. Schools from other EU

countries wishing to avail of the Scheme must also book directly with the site, using this [Booking Form](#)

3.2 The visit must be undertaken in pursuit of the Primary/Secondary / Vocational / Community School curriculum as approved by the Department of Education and Science.

3.3 In the case of students from other EU countries their visit must be undertaken in pursuit of their relevant primary / secondary level course of study set out in the national curriculum in their parent country. The onus of proof rests with the applicant to the satisfaction of OPW Visitor Services who reserve the right to charge a full admission fee in any circumstances it considers appropriate.

3.4 Qualifying visits under this Scheme must be made during the school academic year. Any visits outside the academic year will be deemed to be private visits and will be charged at the full group/child rate normally applying. Some sites, for operational reasons, do not or cannot accept bookings under the Scheme at particular times of the academic year. It is strongly recommended to Teachers/ Group Leaders that they consider timing their visits during the low season to enhance the quality and the enjoyment of their visit. Sites will be able to advise directly as to the best times to visit.

3.5 Schools should be aware that sites may need to close on occasion for maintenance or other works and intending visitors should check the opening dates and times for the sites in question.

3.6 Any special requirements for the Group members in respect of access for those who have limited mobility or other particular needs should be notified at the booking stage so that site staff can advise on the degree of access which is feasible. In this regard, organisers and Group sponsors should note that in many cases, due to the nature of many historic sites, it is not always possible to guarantee access for those with limited mobility and it is always advisable to check ahead to avoid disappointment.

3.7 Any special requests relating to Guided Tours in a specific language must also be advised in advance at the time of booking. Site staff will advise on the availability of guide services in the language sought. Teachers / Group Leaders and organisers should be aware that while Guide staff will endeavour to meet the request, it may not be possible in every instance to accommodate either Irish or foreign language needs.

3.8 It is the responsibility of the Teacher / Group Leader to ensure that the necessary advance notice to the site in terms of both access on the given date and any additional needs arising has been given to ensure availability of access to the site for the group on the desired date and the provision of a quality service to them. No responsibility will attach to the site personnel or to OPW Visitor Services arising from a failure on the part of the group sponsors to address this issue.

3.9 The Teacher / Group Leader will receive confirmation of the booking in writing in advance. This document **must** be presented on the day of the visit: it will entitle the named group to a single entry pass valid only for the day / date stated. On the day of the visit, one named Teacher / Group Leader will liaise with the Site Guide personnel and provide all the necessary information in relation to the Group's visit.

3.10 Certain sites which are closed or have restricted opening hours during the winter **may** , on application, be available for a specific educational visit during the closed period. Availability of access to the site in these circumstances will depend entirely on the availability of Guide staff and assessment by the Site Supervisor or other relevant OPW personnel of potential risks such as works at the site or adverse weather which might render a visit hazardous or impractical. The decision of the Site Supervisor in these cases is final.

3.11 To assist with the safe management of School / Educational Groups, a defined ratio (as set out by Site staff at time of booking) of competent adult supervisors to pupils will be required. In general, a ratio of 20:1 will apply, but in certain cases where individual sites may present particular hazards or where the nature of the group means that they need more attention, a greater ratio of adult supervisors may be required. Adult supervisors will be admitted free with the Group for the purposes of the educational visit. Adults in excess of the desired supervisory ratio who wish to accompany the group on the visit will be admitted at the student rate.

**In any case where there is a doubt as to the application of these conditions, please ring OPW Visitor Services at (01) 647 6592. The decision of Visitor Services in respect of any query will be final.**

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