

YOUR SCHOOL VISIT TO THE OCEAN EXPLORER CENTRE

Our exciting marine visitor centre near Oban welcomes school pupils to become oceanographers and discover the marine world...

The Ocean Explorer Centre has been developed by marine scientists from the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) to share with visitors and schools their fascination and concerns for the sea. It showcases much of the research done at SAMS. We are situated in a scenic location next to the beach on the Dunstaffnage peninsula, and adjacent to the 13th century Dunstaffnage Castle. This provides an ideal base for both indoor and outdoor education.

A snapshot of what you can do during your visit of the centre:

- Spot and identify the sea life under our pontoon
- Explore the life in a drop of sea water using a high-spec microscope
- Discover the largest mountain chain on Earth on our 3-D globe
- Learn about Arctic science, ocean currents, robots and biofuels
- Explore the shape of the local seabed
- Visit our cinema for short films on marine science

With the support from our education team and scientists your pupils can delve deeper into selected topics with one of our workshops

Marine aliens (invasive species)	(P1-7)
Marine pollution	(P3-7)
Food chains in the sea	(P1-7)
The biology and uses of seaweeds	(Nursery - P7)
The other CO ₂ problem: ocean acidification	(P7-S4)
Teeth, tusks and all that stuff	(P3-7)
Seashore safaris	ALL
The power of the small beasties: Plankton	(P3-P7)
Making maps of the sea	(P3-S4)
Renewable energy from the sea	(P7-S3)
Explore life in the abyss - deep sea biology	(P7-S6)
Sounds of the Sea	(P1-7)
Life as a polar scientist	(P1-S2)
Mixing up the world: ocean currents	(P7-S4)

A more detailed factsheet about these workshops is available on request.

Additional facilities

We can provide a room for you to eat your packed lunches, subject to availability. Please ask when making your booking. In fine weather, school parties might like to sit use our patio picnic tables or wander down to the beach behind the centre to eat their lunch. Toilet facilities are available in the visitor centre. There is also provision to leave coats and bags in the centre whilst undertaking educational activities.

Shop: We have selected a range of marine and science themed products – many of educational value – including items for visitors on a ‘penny’ budget! We also stock a small but exciting range of sea or science related books, toys, cards, jewellery homeware and chocolates.

Booking

To book your school visit, please phone Helen McNeill on 01631 559123 or e-mail Helen.McNeill@sams.ac.uk to discuss possible dates. Please have alternative dates available in case we cannot accommodate your first choice.

Costs

To ensure that everyone can access education about the marine environment we have recently decided to drop compulsory entrance and workshop charges. Instead we hope to cover our costs from voluntary donations and that groups that can afford it will donate at least £2.50 per pupil for workshops. Donations can be made in cash, by cheque (payable to SAMS) or by BACS.

Cancellations

Please let us know in good time if you have to cancel a visit. We will let you know at the earliest opportunity should a key member of staff at our end become unavailable – we might have to change the focus of the workshop in such an instance.

Planning visits for teachers

We encourage teachers who have not visited the OEC before to visit us ahead of a group visit. Helen McNeill, our outreach officer, will be happy to show you round and discuss workshop requirements.

Behaviour

We will make every effort to ensure you and your group have an enjoyable day. However we also have a responsibility to other Ocean Explorer Centre visitors therefore pupils must be supervised. It is the responsibility of accompanying adults to ensure that pupils behave in an appropriate manner. Teachers and accompanying adults are responsible for the management and discipline of the group. Teachers must remain with their students at all times.

Adult: pupil ratios

Age group	Minimum adult: pupil ratio
Nursery	1 adult for every 3 children
Primary	1 adult for every 6 children
Secondary	1 adult for every 6 children

First Aid

The Ocean Explorer Centre has qualified First Aiders and First Aid kits available at all times.

Risk Assessments & Safety

Risk Assessments have been carried out for the Ocean Explorer Centre and for beach workshops. These are available to teachers and leaders on request. All SAMS staff have been checked by Disclosure Scotland.

Access for All

The Ocean Explorer Centre is fully accessible to wheelchairs and is at ground-floor level only.

Events in the OEC

School pupils may like to come to one of our exciting family-friendly events held at the OEC – from walks to talks, fun days and craft workshops. Look out for posters round local villages and towns as well as e-mail bulletins to your school and the OEC Facebook page and website.

Opening Times

Mon – Fri 10 am – 4 pm (during winter, please check for Christmas holidays)

Directions

On the A85 follow the signs to Dunbeg. Turn off in the village and follow signs for Dunstaffnage Castle and Ocean Explorer Centre. We are situated opposite the main SAMS laboratory on the left hand side of the road next to Little Learner's Nursery. If you use Sat Nav, our postcode is PA37 1QA.

Parking

You can either park your cars or minibus in the car park in front of the OEC, or if space is unavailable, you can park in the main SAMS visitor car park for the Sir John Murray Building and walk across the road to the OEC. Parking is free.

Further information

If you need any further information or assistance, please get in touch with Helen McNeill (E: Helen.McNeill@sams.ac.uk; T: 01631 559 123)

www.oceanexplorercentre.org