

BRIAN MOSES, children's poet

www.brianmoses.co.uk

On a visit, target specific classes or organise talks or readings to larger groups, maybe a whole key stage. Allow for flexibility.

Instead of single classes for workshops, suggest forming a group from different classes in the same year group, able writers perhaps, or reluctant writers.

These children can then cascade their experiences once they return to their classrooms, with their own poems acting as a stimulus to get other children writing.

Don't allow yourself to take on too much. Working solidly from 9am to 3.30pm with a succession of classes will mean that your enthusiasm suffers.

Some schools may ask you to spend 20 minutes with every class. Such a piecemeal approach won't be satisfying for either you or the children involved.

You need down time in a school which after all, is full on for much of the day.

Try to make sure that teachers are preparing for your visit by familiarising children with your work. Nothing worse than going in to find the first question is 'What do you write?'

If children are prepared well, they will be excited to meet you and enthusiastic about your work. So send schools links to your writing online or a copy of one of your books.

RACHEL MCCARTHY, former Director of Exeter Poetry Festival

exeterpoetryfestival.wordpress.com

1. The Festival committee first approached the local museum - a public venue being free kept costs to a minimum - to alert the events team to the Festival (approx. 3 months in advance). We outlined a plan and a theme based on the museum's exhibitions - one to commemorate the start of the First World War and, the following year, the history of the city.

2. We'd ask for a date when a meeting room could be made available for the children to look at each other's work once it was finished.

3. Once a number of possible dates were agreed with the museum, we identified a number of state schools (we worked with both primary and secondary). We sequentially approached the Headmaster and Head of English in each, with a detailed plan, the days available and the agreement of the museum.

4. This detailed plan would include asking for 10 children, gifted or requiring encouragement in English and 10 gifted in art, from one age group, and accompanying staff members. The permissions regarding taking the children out of the school environment were left with the school. We assured CRB-checked tutors experienced working with children, and CRB checked Festival members.

[For more information about CRB checks (now called DBS, or Disclosure and Barring Service, checks) when working with children, see pg. 4 of our Guide for Authors Visiting Schools or Libraries, at www.societyofauthors.org/advice/guides. Please note that the SoA cannot apply for checks on behalf of its members.]

5. The committee identified appropriate tutors through local contacts, and partner organisations e.g. [Apples and Snakes](#) and the NPO Cypress Well [now the [Literature Works Annual Fund](#)].

6. A list of possible tutors were identified in both the art-area and poetry, and matched depending on their interests. They would then be approached with a financial offer.

7. We would provide materials, and offer extra supervision to complement the events team. The children would be paired and asked to pick an object to write/draw.

8. A pamphlet of the children's work would then be produced in the run-up to the Festival with an event for the children to read their poems on the weekend of the Festival.

This format has proved successful and seen three pamphlets produced so far, and the response of both the school, parents and children extremely positive.