



BLUEBELL RAILWAY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

School Visits



1. The Bluebell Railway demonstrates Great Britain's unique contribution to the development and operation of rail travel from the Victorian era to the end of steam hauled passenger services in 1968. We operate a heritage service over 11 miles between Sheffield Park and East Grinstead, part of the former line between East Grinstead and Lewes which opened in 1882 and closed in 1958. We run a daily service of three trains a day in term time between Easter and October.
2. We welcome school parties and can provide a range of visiting experiences, including: -
 - General visits – includes a guided tour and a train trip – programme at A below.
 - WW11 Evacuation Exercises – includes a guided tour, a train trip and a wartime themed exercise – programme at B below
 - Enrichment visits – includes a guided tour, a train trip and a visit to part of the Railway not generally open to the public – programme at C below
 - Course specific visits, recent ones have included: -

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|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Victorian studies (photo above) | Rural regeneration |
| Through the carriage window | Travel through time |
3. Further information can be obtained from the Education Officer at education@bluebell-railway.co.uk or from the Sales and Information Office on 01825 720800.
4. By visiting our website – www.bluebell-railway.com – and clicking on the School Groups link you can access a range of downloadable background material of interest, plus guidance on risk assessment. We offer two complimentary tickets to enable teachers to carry out their risk assessments – please ask for details.

A. General School Visits



5. We offer an unrivalled opportunity for pupils to learn about the history of the railways of the UK and the way in which they influenced and aided the development of both industry and agriculture, as well as the ability to travel to and from work over longer distances. Pupils can also learn how we operate, maintain and restore both locomotives and carriages.

6. Schools should aim to arrive at Sheffield Park Station around 10 am, where they will be met by our team of Guides, who will show the children around the station, including the signal box, the locomotive shed and the Museum and explain to them how the railways evolved and how we operate – we may need to break the party into smaller groups for this purpose.



7. The party will then join the 11am train for the 22 mile round trip to East Grinstead, calling at Horsted Keynes, and Kingscote - during the journey the Guides will point out aspects of interest en route. At East Grinstead the children can disembark and watch the locomotive run around its train and couple up for the return journey. Whenever possible we will get the children onto the footplate of the locomotive to experience the feel of an engine in steam.



8. Departing from East Grinstead at 12 noon, the train arrives back at Sheffield Park at

12 42 pm, where the party can disembark and take lunch in our picnic area. After lunch there is normally time to complete any outstanding aspects of the visit or to undertake your own specific projects, before departure back to school around 2pm.

9. Very young children often find the full line round trip a little long and in these cases we recommend a slightly shorter trip, with the party alighting from the 11 am train at Kingscote Station at 11 31 am and re-joining the train for the return trip at 12 08 pm. This allows time for a play period in the picnic field and a different experience – waiting for the train to arrive.

10. We provide all pupils with a souvenir ticket and information about coming events. during the journey the train passes through a half mile long tunnel and, with your agreement, we can turn the lights on and off in the tunnel, invariably highly popular with the children.

B. World War11 Evacuation Exercise



11. Schools should aim to arrive at Sheffield Park Station around 10 am, where they will be met by our team of Guides, who will show the children around the station, including the signal box, the locomotive shed and the Museum and explain to them how railways evolved and operate – we may need to break the party into smaller group for this purpose.

12. The party will then join the 11 am train for East Grinstead, calling at Horsted Keynes and Kingscote en route. Our team of actors will join the train at Horsted Keynes and will check the children's ID cards and luggage labels en route. At East Grinstead the children can disembark and watch the locomotive run around its train and couple up for the return journey. Whenever possible- we will try to get the children onto the footplate of the locomotive to experience the feel of an engine in steam.

13. Re-joining the train, departure from East Grinstead will be at 12 noon, with arrival at Horsted Keynes at 12 22 pm where the party will disembark. You might like to break for lunch at that point in platforms. After lunch our picnic area at the station or on the station room, where their ID cards will again be inspected and stamped by the actors - any missing/ damaged cards will have consequences. We will then sound the air raid alarm and the party will descend to the station subway to shelter from any attack – while in the subway the party can engage in wartime



songs, whilst we play a wartime air raid soundtrack. After the all clear is sounded the party will return to the platform.

14. On the platform we can engage in role play, with the adults in the party acting as members of local families to which the children will be billeted for the duration of the war. Time permitting, the children can then write postcards home, posting these in the post-box at the station.



15. Departure for school is around 2 pm – from Horsted Keynes.



16. Some practical points: -

- We will provide the children with a souvenir ticket – which will need to be shown to the Ticket Inspectors on the train and information about coming events.
- You may want to arrange for the children to be dressed in period in outfits, with gas masks and wartime food for lunch.
- You should provide the children with ID cards that can be inspected and stamped.
- You may want to practise some songs of the era before the visit.
- Any postcards will need to be stamped before posting.
- The party will return to school from Horsted Keynes Station, not Sheffield Park and the coach will need to meet you there - we can provide guidance for the drivers (the postcode is RH17 7BB).
- We pass through a half mile long tunnel, twice, during the trip and, if you are content, we may turn the train lights out in the tunnel. This is invariably extremely popular with the children.



17. Finally, an information leaflet - 4f - The Lewes and East Grinstead Railway in Wartime which provides some background about wartime incidents on and around the railway can be found on our website.

C. School Enrichment Visits



18. The Bluebell Railway demonstrates Great Britain's unique contribution to the development and operation of rail travel from the Victorian era to the end of steam hauled passenger services in the 1960s.

19. We offer an unrivalled opportunity for pupils to learn about the history of the railways of the UK and the way in which they influenced and aided the development of both industry and agriculture as well as the ability to travel to and from work over longer distances. Pupils can also learn how we operate, maintain and restore both locomotives and carriages. Visits can also be tailored to meet your specific needs.

20. Three of our four stations have been restored to portray the different eras of the Railway's history, i.e. Victorian, 1920s and 1950s while our Museum, at Sheffield Park Station tells the story of the Bluebell within the context of railway development nationally, through a range of displays, including some interactives.

21. Schools should aim to arrive at Sheffield Park Station around 10 am where they will be met by our team of Guides, who will show the children around the station, including the signal box, the locomotive shed and the Museum and explain how the railways evolved and how we operate – we may need to break the party into smaller groups for this purpose.

22. The party will then join the 11 am train for the 22 mile round trip to East Grinstead, stopping at Horsted Keynes, and Kingscote, en route, during the journey the Guides will point out aspects of interest. At East Grinstead the children can disembark and watch the locomotive run around its train and couple up for the return journey. Whenever possible we will try to get the children onto the footplate of the locomotive to experience the feel of an engine in steam.

23. Departing from East Grinstead at 12 noon, the train arrives at Horsted Keynes at 12 22 pm, where the party can disembark and have lunch in our picnic area. After lunch a visit can be arranged to the Railway's Carriage and Wagon Department, where our historic rolling stock is maintained and restored - departure back to school is from Horsted Keynes around 2 pm.



24. Alternatively, the party can remain on the train and continue to Sheffield Park, taking lunch in the picnic area there before completing any project work that you may have prepared.

24. We can also arrange the visit in such a way as to meet any specific interests that you would like to explore.
25. We provide all pupils with a souvenir ticket and information about coming events.
26. During the journey the train passes through a half mile long tunnel and, with your agreement, we can turn the lights on and off in the tunnel, invariably highly popular with the children.