



## **The Natural History Museum's pledge for the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto**

### **Commitment**

Learning is central to our mission: we maintain and develop the collections we care for and use them to promote the discovery, understanding, responsible use and enjoyment of the natural world. We provide expertise, collaboration and resources for learning, from schools programmes to PhD education. Our learning programme reflects the needs and concerns of society and the government agenda for learning, particularly in science.

### **Our credentials**

Welcoming school visits has been an integral part of our work since the nineteenth century. Today we welcome over 130,000 4-19 year old students each year from 1,940 schools across the UK. We offer a consistent, high quality learning experience with well qualified and trained education staff and volunteers.

The resources of the Museum – our collection, consisting of over 70 million specimens, 350 scientists, 50 educators, galleries and website – are a compelling complement to the classroom. Our programmes motivate students and instil a passion for science and the natural world. 22% of students who participated in our A-level days in 2005 told us that the experience had positively affected their plans to study science at university. Given current concern about the decline in science take up post 16, that level of inspiration clearly demonstrates the power of out of classroom learning.

### **How we address barriers to participation**

We work closely with teachers, Local Education Authority Science Advisers and other partners such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to ensure that our galleries, online materials and programmes meet their needs and to facilitate safe visits. Our termly teachers' packs and online resources provide easy access to knowledge, expertise and guidance. These resources can inspire and develop teachers as well as pupils and we offer a thriving programme of continuous professional development in partnership with Science Learning Centres.

An in-depth consultation with secondary science teachers across England showed that natural history museums have a substantial role to play in supporting curriculum delivery, particularly in hard to teach areas, and in bringing science and its applications to life.

We work actively with teachers to enable non-visiting schools to come to the Museum. We are broadening access by expanding our offer to ensure that our programme is culturally inclusive and accessible. Remote access, through videoconferencing, is an increasingly popular part of our work.

### **What we offer**

The Museum offers a wide range of curriculum-linked, fun, inspirational learning experiences for all ages and abilities. These range from interactive story-telling workshops with puppets for under-5s to international youth summits with world-class scientists on issues such as climate change for 16-19 year olds. Our dedicated learning spaces include two hands-on science centres, *Earth Lab and Investigate*, which welcomed over 80,000 school and family visitors last year, and a wildlife garden, where students carry out practical enquiry-based activities. In our state of the art *Nature Live* studio, students debate topical science issues with our scientists.

Our programmes include innovative activities and resources for younger children that use role-play to engage them in scientific enquiry in a fun and memorable way. For older students, we focus on inspiring further scientific study and instilling scientific literacy. We take them behind-the-scenes to meet our scientists face-to-face and get engaged with their work, whilst experiencing the awe and wonder of the natural world through exposure to our vast collections.

### **Future aspirations**

We plan to nurture and expand our school audience at the Museum by developing innovative new activities, on site, online and through videoconferencing. Our learning offer works neatly with the new science GCSE and A-level qualifications, in explaining how science is relevant to society. Darwin Centre Phase Two, a new development of the Museum due to open in 2009, will contain a gallery focusing on the process and relevance of our science for 14-19 year-old students, and a studio where students can immerse themselves in interactive experiences focusing on challenging concepts such as evolution, and debate with our scientists.

We will continue to work in partnership with natural history museums across England to harness their potential for engaging with secondary science. By 2012, we hope that every secondary science student in England will be able to take part in a structured learning experience at a natural history museum. The experience they have will be transformative. It will inspire them to study science further and build their scientific literacy.

We will continue to advocate the case for learning outside the classroom.