

A school visit

Some time before the visit liaise with the school to find out:-

- if they are expecting you to visit more than one group
- the numbers in each group
- how much time they have allocated for the visit
- the age of the children
- if the children have already been taught something about bees

This information is necessary to help you plan the timing and content of your presentation. Each visiting beekeeper must work out a plan that suits him (or her)

Remember that young children have a short attention span so that any formal talk must be short. It helps to illustrate any 'talk' with real things to look at. The provision of real things to touch, smell and look at provides a novel and stimulating experience for the children. That we have so much to show makes our job very easy. We don't have to be brilliant speakers, the bees and equipment do it for us.

There is a lot to be said for working in pairs. There are two of you to load and unload equipment; if the children are looking at exhibits it is easier to keep an eye on things and talk to them.

When you have worked out a plan it is a good idea to go through it with the teacher in charge. You need to make sure that there is room for your equipment and that you will have time to set it up. You may need to modify your plans.

Things we take

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| Observation hive | Workmate to support it, sticky tape in case it leaks and dispenser to spray detergent solution on any escaping bees. |
| Empty hive | with frames. We try to include a used comb which has dead brood, a comb with some pollen and honey, an empty comb and a frame of foundation. In the super we have a comb of capped honey. We make sure there is no wax moth! |
| Beekeeping | smoker, fuel, matches (check on smoke alarms! And |

equipment	only keep alight for a moment), tool, queen marking kit (for when they ask)
Beekeeping clothes	Should be clean, some people arrive in them. Spare veils etc are much appreciated for dressing up.
Honey	We usually take samples of clear and cloudy honey and cut comb. We do honey tasting with the younger ones using bread sticks. Plastic tablecloth and wet J-cloths are needed
Wax	Off cuts of foundation and pieces of wax to smell, feel and even to mould. Display of wax products including foundation, polish, skin cream, candles etc.
Pollination	Wild flowers in season. Fruits and flowers if possible. Model of flower and bee to demonstrate pollination.
Wild comb	Large piece of wild comb if possible mounted. Model of cells with contents for demonstration.
Dead bees and other insects	Magnifying glasses set up to look at specimens. These include bumble bees, solitary bees and wasps. We encourage them to touch the dead bees and look properly at them. Quiz to recognize some insects. Possibly wasps nest.
Microscope slides	For older children, slides and pictures to illustrate the theme that the bee has a kit of parts and to make use of the infrequently used microscopes that many schools have.
Pictures:	Over the years we have put together a big selection. They must be laminated. There are some useful ones amongst the 12 large 'study prints' (IBRA), and I always use the large 'Life of the honeybee' poster showing stages of development. The Apistan advert showing a single bee with a pollen load is superb. Pictures from the Bees in the Curriculum pack can also be used and help advertise the pack to the school.

We usually give a short talk about honeybees and enact what the beekeeper does when he opens a hive. Then the classes break into smaller groups to look at and talk about all the exhibits but the organization and material depends very much on the number and age of the children.

There are other different approaches which can be very successful. Here are some ideas:-

Enter wearing your full suit and veil.

Base your visit on a story. (try Liz Hull's 'I want to Dance').

Show a video of you working your colonies or taking a swarm.

Pre-school and reception class love learning simple bee rhymes.

Young children can pretend to be worker bees in a hive doing the various tasks or going through the stages of development (see Karl Showlers idea below)

The observation hive is usually the highlight of a school visit. The children are fascinated by the experience of seeing live bees on the comb.

However a single brood comb in a transparent walled case provides a worthwhile substitute.

The case which is similar to a display case as used for showing combs can be taken to a working hive and a single comb with brood and nurse bees inserted into it: the lid is then closed. After the school visit the frame can be returned to the colony with little ill effect. Some beekeepers are even prepared to take their queen out for a short trip like this.

Karl Showler's idea for a nursery school visit:-

"To conclude the morning, we enacted the life of the baby bee, with drum beats to represent the passing days. Curl up as an egg, three drum beats. Stretch out as a larva, open mouth and eyes to look hungry, ten beats. Go to sleep to pupate and after eight beats, jump up, flap your wings and dance around the main hall with a jolly buzz."

© Bees4Kids 2008

www.bbka.org.uk