

A Guide For Observatory Visits

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

We hope the weather will be clear on the evening of your visit; we can still function with clear gaps between the clouds. If the sky is completely covered we will give a planetarium show and presentation in our adjacent resource room.



If the sky is clear two or three demonstrators will be present and initially the party will be split into smaller groups who will use each of the instruments in turn. Our demonstrators are enthusiastic members of the local Astronomical Society who are very generous in giving of their free time to share their interest with new observers. Visiting leaders and teachers are asked to ensure that they retain responsibility for the behaviour of their group. After observing there will be a short Planetarium show to consolidate what has been seen.

If the sky is cloudy we start with a Planetarium show and hope for a clear patch later. If not the telescopes etc will be demonstrated, and 1 hour 15mins still passes very quickly.

HOW LONG DO SESSIONS LAST?

Visits for junior groups last 1 hour 15 minutes with an option to extend a little if the sky is clear. Adult groups tend to spend 1 hour 30 minutes with us.

HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN ATTEND?

The maximum number that can attend a session is 19 (to include Teachers or Leaders). This prevents too much time waiting for instruments and suits the seating in the Planetarium.

CAN YOUNG CHILDREN COME ALONG?

We suggest nine years is the minimum age for children in a mixed group. Parents must remember that a Planetarium show takes place in complete darkness, which some young children may find difficult to cope with and this can be distracting for other members of the group.

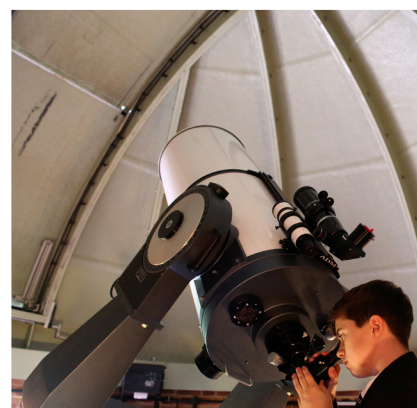
A FEW DO's AND DON'Ts

Observatories are by necessity very cold in winter as heating introduces thermal currents which reduce visible detail. Part of your visit will also take place outside using portable telescopes. **It is important to make certain that all members of your group understand that they must dress well with many layers, hats, gloves etc.** If not prepared visitors can get very cold on a frosty night!

Please do not bring bags etc into the dome as they can cause a trip hazard in the dark.

Food and drink are also banned as sticky fingers and telescope eyepieces do not mix!

No smoking or alcohol is permitted on the School Estate.



HOW MUCH DOES A VISIT COST?

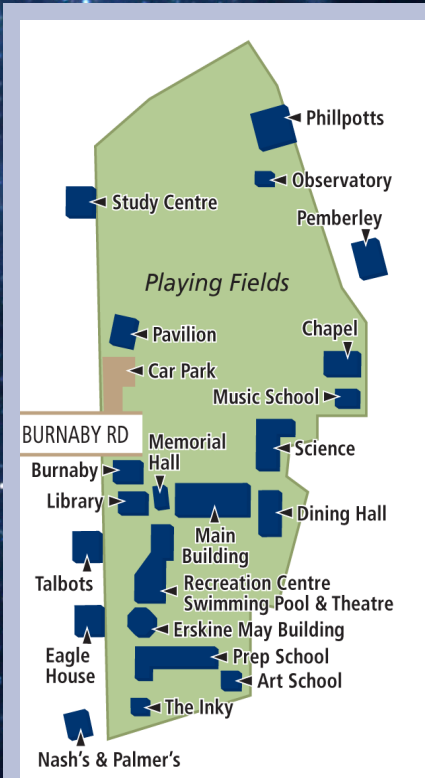
There is no charge for groups visiting the Observatory, but once a booking has been made we ask for at least one week's notice if you do not intend to visit so the date can be offered to other groups.

WHEN DO YOU RUN SESSIONS?

The Observatory mainly operates during term time from mid-September to mid-April in the evenings. Exact start times can be tailored to your group. November to March is very popular with younger groups and sessions will need to be booked well in advance.

WHERE WE ARE?

Entry to the Observatory is from Pemberley Avenue next to Phillpotts Boarding House. Please use postcode **MK40 2LD** for Satellite Navigation systems.



Vehicles should be parked on Pemberley Avenue and we will meet you at the Observatory gate.

Please do not walk over the playing fields from the School, as they can be very muddy in winter and covered with grass clippings in summer.

HOW DO I BOOK A VISIT?

If you wish to arrange a visit to the observatory, please email our Head of Astronomy, **Mr Linton Guise**, at observatory@bedfordschool.org.uk

Judging by the letters received since the project opened all the groups that have visited so far have enjoyed the sessions immensely. We hope you have a similar experience, please get in touch if you have any queries.

MORE INFORMATION

Details of the Bedford Astronomical Society, including links to the observatory and other useful astronomical sites can be found at www.bedsastro.org.uk