

Dolphin science workshops: a new approach to marine science education

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There is an observed lack of marine education, particularly in relation to the offshore marine environment, in the UK National Curriculum and ORCA aims to address this worrying issue through the launch of a new Dolphin Science Education Programme. ORCA has developed a three stage, curriculum-linked education programme consisting of: In-school dolphin science workshops; half-day excursions to teach dolphin research skills; and 3-day field trips to conduct whale and dolphin (cetacean) surveys at sea. This programme is currently delivered to local primary schools at Key Stage (KS) 1 and 2 (children aged 3-11 yrs.) in the Metropolitan Borough of North Tyneside, North East England. Over a three month period, March-May 2012, ORCA delivered the three stages of the Dolphin Science Education Programme to a group of KS 2 students (aged 9-10) from St Peter's Church of England Primary School. Staggering the interaction over this 3-month period we observed a discernible level of information retention amongst students between sessions and a noticeable improvement in the student's scientific investigation and enquiry skills over time. The programme gives students access to new opportunities, including the chance for many to see their first cetacean during the survey. ORCA is working in partnership with a commercial ferry operator to deliver the Dolphin Science Education Programme, making this an affordable and accessible marine science education programme for local schools to participate in. ORCA have demonstrated that providing a mix of interactive educational activities whilst utilising a variety of memorable learning environments is a successful way to engage students and faculty members in marine science and encourage advocacy of the local marine environment. Over the next year ORCA plans to promote the offering of the Dolphin Science Education Programme to more local schools as part of its regional outreach project 'Your Seas'.