2027 Mersey - River Study (KS2/3)

What better way to study a river than by being next to it. Whilst in class students will have been watching videos and filling in worksheets but we can offer an immersive experience which will reinforce the topic. We know in school you will have been asking some of these questions ...

What is a river? Where does it start and finish and what happens in between? How are they used? How have humans impacted rivers and what are consequence of that?

The Mersey around our centre is perfect to answer so many of these questions, lots of natural and engineered features are present...the efforts to protect from flooding and the consequences when it does. We can get children into the river to do some 'kick test' sampling of the river quality to find out what is living in the river.....a surprisingly large and varied amount. Also, what better way to see a river (and loads of fun) than a session actually on the river.....looking for plant life, fish and to understand flow and current.

We can run trips all year round but ideally you should plan a river topic in September or from mid April onwards....ideally May when life in the river is really starting to wake up!

(we base our prices on a standard 30 in a class if you are a little over that is fine...if you are significantly under then please contact us as we might not need as many staff and as such might be able to reduce the price) PRICE INCREASE OF 3% on 2026

Option 1 – study and river trip

Study followed by canoe trip to Didsbury or Northenden to look at flood defences. (£763.85 /class of 30 to max 33 pupils)

ONLY 1 CLASS PER DAY

This option is all based around our Centre starting at Burnage Rugby Club SK4 3EA BUT finishes either at Didsbury (M20 2RU) or Northenden (M22 4HJ)

Arrival and greetings

Introduction and interactive presentation about the River Mersey.

Morning rotation of activities

1. River quality study - led by Venture-Out
2. Short river walk study – led by Venture-Out

Afternoon

River canoe trip for whole class to either Didsbury (Simon's Bridge) or Northenden. (this is great fun but does mean we finish at a different location).

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Option 2 – study and local canoe (MOST POPULAR)

(£594.10 class of up to 30 to max 33 pupils)

WE HAVE A PLAN THAT WOULD WORK WITH 45 OR 60 STUDENTS IN A DAY

This option is all based around our Centre and starts and finishes at Burnage Rugby Club SK4 3EA

Arrival and greetings

Introduction and presentation about the River Mersey. Break into 2 groups of 15 and rotate activities.

Rotation activities *(breaks and lunch between rotations)*

MORNING

1. River quality study - looking at water quality and water animal life is in the riverbed.
2. Walk and talk study - children will answer a short questionnaire based on the features that they come across

AFTERNOON

3. Canoe session ON the river. - what better way to be studying a river than to be on it!!
4. We add Orienteering into the day (good for Geography and Maths) - this allows us to rotate 4 groups during the day

Option 3 – all land-based study

(£445.58 for a class of up to 30 to 33 max)
pupils

For teachers that don't want to canoe with their students

Arrival and greetings

Introduction and presentation about the River Mersey.

Morning

Class split into 2 groups and begin a 1.5hr session.

Group 1

1. A walking survey up-stream from the centre. Identifying features and answering a set of questions.
2. Performs River quality study.

Group 2

1. Undertakes river walk down-stream using a map to visit features of erosion and flood defence.
2. We will also visit a site a little down river to look at the effect of gravity in producing a rapid and on a bend to look at the effects on an 'inside and outside' bend.

Afternoon

Groups swap activities.

Requires two Venture-Out staff all day.

Alternatives?

Fletcher Moss Flood Basin – we can lead a class around the Fletcher Moss Flood Basin looking at all the man-made feature that have been put in place to try to protect Didsbury and other areas down river from flooding, (this is accessible from Didsbury Village Tram station, and you could bring a picnic with you to make a whole day out).

Is your school near a River?
Maybe we can come to you and help you study your local river?

We are very flexible and creative in what we do and often tweak our offers to school based on their specific requirements and can mix and match different. Lots depends on the time you can get to us and need leave and how you are travelling.

Details of each activity option

Welcome and presentation.

Introducing the Mersey and the river study.

- Source of the Mersey in Derbyshire (Dammed tributaries, gritstone bedrock)
- Historic uses and abuses,
- Project to clean up and install flood protection.
- Looking at a map of local area.

Water quality survey

Visual classification: The pupils use a checklist to conduct a visual inspection of the riverbank, bottom and surface to rate the water quality on a scale.
River invertebrate classification: The presence of certain invertebrates in the river indicates the quality of the water. Pupils carry out a 'river dip' with nets and observation equipment. And use an identification sheet to classify what they have caught.

- Using a classification key to identify invertebrates.
- Identify a food chain and web in the Mersey River.

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Short river survey walk

Groups use a map to walk to set points on the river near the centre. There are photos to help them determine when they have found a point. At that point the leader reads information from a pack and points out the feature being discussed. Students have clipboards and recording sheets.

Short River Survey Walk (extended)

The above walk can be extended to do a study of the river flow speed at different points.

Canoe – local canoeing

(10 to 23 students at a time in rotations)

It's good to actually get on the river and whilst having fun we can help the students to consider flow and current, maybe see some fish, water plant life and observe what birds inhabit the river banks.

Canoe - down river trip - to Didsbury or Northenden

(30 students in one trip or 45 can be split with half walking and half canoeing and then split)

To study further points along the river where erosion and flood protection features are obvious, we can lead you on a river trip. We use rafted canoes - this is two canoes strapped together by a wooden beam to make a catamaran that is extremely stable, cannot turn over and is easier to paddle by the group. 6 to 8 people can fit in one raft, and this reduces the number of craft on the river to be managed. The river is mainly grade 1 and we regularly paddle groups of 30 down this section in rafted canoes. The trip leaders are well qualified and very experienced. We can provide a risk assessment and will send you our insurance and copy of our Adventurous Activity license.

River walking trip

A 2 km walking trip is undertaken from the centre along the Mersey River path to Old Bedian's Rugby.
Visit a rapid where there is obvious bank erosion and differing flow speed.
Perform a river flow speed comparison.
This path is mainly on the top of a flood control dyke and protects houses behind.
Visit a flood meadow control gate and follow the flood channel into the meadow around Old Bedian's Rugby club. Group collects photographic evidence.

Previous customers include:

William Hulme Grammar School / Northenden Community School / Cavendish Primary School / St Catherines RC Primary School / Tithe Barn Primary School I/ Newall Green Primary School / Didsbury Road Primary School

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Students conduct river dip on a side channel of the Mersey at our centre.



River dipping equipment and identifications sheets used to determine water quality (moderately clean) and invertebrates and fish found.





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Students paddling rafted canoes – strapped together for stability. Channelled river.



Pupils can get out of boats to study the corner, to study deposition and erosion and flow speeds.



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Students stop at the natural beach halfway through the trip.



Students passing underneath Simon's Bridge, Didsbury.



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Flood meadow control gate at Old Bedian's Rugby club.



Students pointing out the concrete reinforcement of the channelled banks.



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Students can get to run the weir at Northenden (an erosion protection feature). This is extremely safe to do in rafted canoes and we do numerous times a week without incident. Think of it like a water slide with a splash at the end. If a teacher or schools is uncomfortable with this, we can get the group off the river above the weir – this is at the get off point and doesn't shorten the trip.



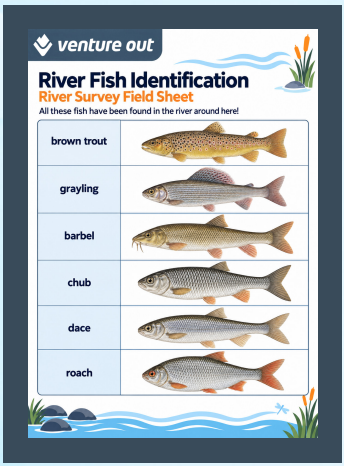


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Interactive Learning.

Whilst we promise this to be a fun and exciting day out, we recognise the importance of the educational value of this trip.

Our river quality survey is accompanied by 3 worksheets to support the session as well as our river dip equipment to ensure children are supported by educational information whilst having fun.

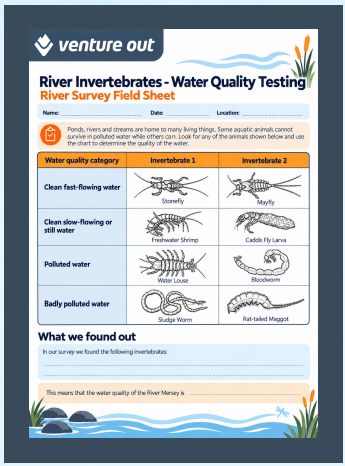

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River Fish Identification

River Survey Field Sheet

All these fish have been found in the river around here!

brown trout	
grayling	
barbel	
chub	
dace	
roach	


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River Invertebrates - Water Quality Testing

River Survey Field Sheet

Name: Date: Location:

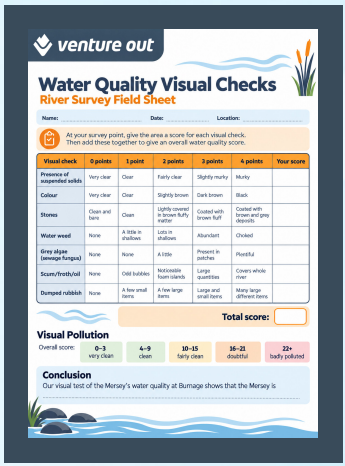
Ponds, rivers and streams are home to many living things. Some aquatic animals cannot survive in polluted water while others can. Look for any of the animals shown below and use the chart to determine the quality of the water.

Water quality category	Invertebrate 1	Invertebrate 2
Clean fast-flowing water	Stonefly	Mayfly
Clean slow-flowing or still water	Freshwater Shrimp	Caddis Fly Larva
Polluted water	Water Louse	Bloodworm
Badly polluted water	Sludge Worm	Rat-tailed Maggot

What we found out

In our survey we found the following invertebrates:

This means that the water quality of the River Mersey is


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Water Quality Visual Checks

River Survey Field Sheet

Name: Date: Location:

At your survey point, give the area a score for each visual check. Then add these together to give an overall water quality score.

Visual check	0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points	Your score
Presence of suspended solids	Very clear	Clear	Fairly clear	Slightly murky	Murky	
Colour	Very clear	Clear	Slightly brown	Dark brown	Black	
Stones	Clean and bare	Clean	Lightly covered in brown fluffy matter	Coated with brown fluff	Coated with brown and grey deposits	
Water weed	None	A little in shallows	Lots in shallows	Abundant	Choked	
Grey algae (sewage fungus)	None	None	A little	Present in patches	Plentiful	
Scum/froth/oil	None	Odd bubbles	Noticeable foam islands	Large quantities	Covers whole river	
Dumped rubbish	None	A few small items	A few large items	Large and small items	Many large different items	

Total score:

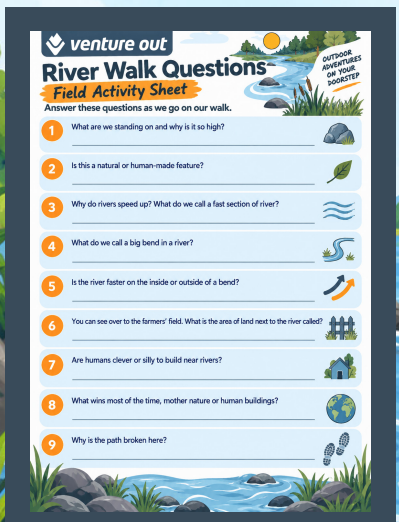
Visual Pollution

Overall score:	0–3 very clean	4–9 clean	10–15 fairly clean	16–21 doubtful	22+ badly polluted

Conclusion

Our visual test of the Mersey's water quality at Burnage shows that the Mersey is

Our river walk questionnaire is a very engaging resource which is comprised of a list of questions designed specifically for our section of the River Mersey, children have the oppourtunity to apply what they have learnt in class directly in an outdoor environment.


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River Walk Questions

Field Activity Sheet

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES ON YOUR DOORSTEP

Answer these questions as we go on our walk.

1. What are we standing on and why is it so high?
2. Is this a natural or human-made feature?
3. Why do rivers speed up? What do we call a fast section of river?
4. What do we call a big bend in a river?
5. Is the river faster on the inside or outside of a bend?
6. You can see over to the farmers' field. What is the area of land next to the river called?
7. Are humans clever or silly to build near rivers?
8. What wins most of the time, mother nature or human buildings?
9. Why is the path broken here?


10. Why are the council not fixing it? What have they done instead?
11. Is a sewage farm a good thing or a bad thing? Why?
12. Is the River Mersey 'very clean'?
13. What likes to eat 'poo'?
14. What washing up liquid do you use at home? Check it out to see if it is environmentally friendly?
15. Why is the river running 'rapidly' here at the bottom of the steps?
16. What is the feature called? (it's not a waterfall)
17. It was built in the Victorian days to give water to the bleachworks which was a big factory behind you? What does bleach do? What happened when they poured the old bleach in the river?