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Accessibility Statement

At Winchester Science Centre we have a mission. We want everyone to have access to a great day out. Get in touch to discuss your day out.



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Who we are

Looking for an action packed family adventure? Set off on an exciting journey through the world of STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) at Winchester Science Centre.

You can climb into a massive guitar and feel it vibrate when people pluck the strings. Blast off on an out-of-this-world journey through Explorer:Space. See science come to life with big explosions and huge wow moments. Get up close to the weird and wonderful nature of the South Downs National Park. And fly through the Solar System in an experience you'll never forget in the Planetarium.



When you arrive

Parking

You'll find nine blue badge disabled car parking bays near to the Science Centre entrance. These are large enough for minibuses. To get to the Science Centre from here, there's a short flight of steps or a sloping path. There are more blue badge bays at the top of the main car park. There's level access to the Science Centre from here. Ask us if you have any special requests - we're here to help.



When you arrive

Entrance and exit

The entrance and exit area is wheelchair accessible. There is a gently sloping tarmac path and the area is well lit with natural and path-side lighting. The building doors are automatic and there are staff in this area if you need any help.



Accessing the Science Centre

Welcome area

There's lots of space in the Science Centre's welcome area, It can get a little busy during school holidays. You may find a queue system in place if this happens. Let us know if you find queueing difficult when you arrive and we'll be happy to help.

Ticket desks

You'll find the ticket desks right in front of you as you arrive.



Accessing the Science Centre

Tickets

If you have accessibility needs and require a carer/personal assistant, you can bring them with you for free. You'll need to book both types of ticket online in advance.

Wheelchair loan

Want to borrow a wheelchair for your visit? You can book them by calling or emailing us. They're available on a first-come-first-served basis so it's best to book as early as you can.

Assistance dogs

Want to bring your assistance dog? Great - you'll both get a very warm welcome. Just ask at reception if you need water or poo bags and we will be happy to supply them.

Getting around

Lifts and access

The Science Centre is completely open plan. There are doors inside the public areas to access the toilets, the Planetarium, classrooms and Science Theatre. Every floor has a level surface and all the exhibits have lots of space for wheelchairs and pushchairs. There are seats everywhere and a roll-on-roll-off lift that's big enough for a wheelchair and carer/personal assistant. There are also two sets of stairs between the two floors. Both of these have hand rails.

Lift dimensions - width of door: 80cm; length of door: 1.5m.



Getting around

Evacuation

An evacuation is very unlikely but here's what you need to know. You'll find emergency exits on both floors. A member of staff will show you where your nearest exit is. All evacuation routes are step-free. The lift is not fire-safe but there are exits on the lower floor on hard-standing ground. In the unlikely event that these exits can't be used, the fire service are aware that the grassy field evacuation routes can be treated as muster points. If you have any concerns about evacuation points we would be happy to chat with you before visiting.

The Planetarium

If you use a wheelchair or mobility scooter, there are spaces reserved just for you. There are six spaces at the back with out-of-this-world views of the 360° screen. Beside these spaces are seats for friends and family. You'll find these spaces as you enter through the main door. We recommend sitting at the back as the views of the dome are better. If you would prefer to sit at the front, just let us know. There's a door to this level from the path outside.

Would you prefer to transfer to a seat? No problem. There's space to store wheelchairs at the back of the Planetarium. The steps are wide and broad and seating is raked - seats at the back sit almost upright, seats at the front lean back.

The Planetarium

Whichever level you choose, you'll always get a padded flip-up seat with head-rest. Some seats even have space to extend a single leg at an angle. We also have padded office-style chairs that can be put in the wheelchair spaces. Let us know if you would like one of these.

Seat dimensions - width: 51cm, reduced to 46.5cm by the arm rests; office-style chairs width: 40cm with no arm rests.



The Planetarium

Access to the stage

Are you presenting in the Planetarium? You'll find the stage at the bottom of the stairs, right at the front. There's also a stage door which has level access from a path outside. The stage has a single step but a ramp can be arranged if needed. Just let our team know in advance. There's lots of space on the stage for wheelchairs. We've got fixed microphones and hand-held or lapel mics for use too.

Epilepsy and balance disorders

Some of our film shows have brief flashing lights. We'll let you know well in advance so that you can plan your day. If you have balance or neurological conditions, the motion of the Planetarium may make you feel disoriented or uncomfortable.

The Planetarium

Extreme motion sickness? We're sorry to say that the Planetarium may not be for you.

Visual impairments

The stairs have lights to make them easy to see. And if you need an extra hand, just ask a member of the team - we're here to help.

Tactile resources

We've got super 3D printed models and NASA's official tactile books. They're great when you're watching our live shows.

The Planetarium

Assistive listening system

If English isn't your first language, ask to use our assistive listening system. You'll be able to enjoy our film shows in a variety of other languages. Languages available are set by the show providers but we are working with them to add to this.

Subtitles and British Sign Language days

Our fulldome film shows have subtitles. We'll let you know on our website and when you're booking which shows these are. We also have British Sign Language days with a friendly interpreter – check out our website for the special dates.

The Planetarium

Chatterbox shows

The Planetarium is an unusual and exciting experience. Every show is relaxed and fun with quiet and calm presentations. You can talk, move around, go in and out and ask questions.

Visitors with autism

Queuing

Autistic visitors don't need to queue when it's busy. Just talk to us when you arrive and we'll help.

Social story

Before you visit, watch or read our social story so you know what to expect. You can find them [here](#).

The Planetarium

The Planetarium is an unusual and exciting experience. Every show is relaxed and fun with quiet and calm presentations. You can talk, move around, go in and out and ask questions.



Visitors with autism

Recombobulation Room

Need some quiet space? Come to the Recombobulation Room. It's a specially designed quiet space – a peaceful sanctuary away from the hustle and bustle of the Science Centre. It's a calm, empty, space with hardly any sound and a lovely dimmable light. Sit on the floor and watch the clouds on the ceiling while you relax. You'll find the Recombobulation Room on the lower level next to one of the flights of stairs.

Not-so-busy times

Would you prefer to come to the Science Centre when it's not so busy? The best time is between 3pm and 5pm. That's when the building has less people in and the shows are less busy.

Visitors with autism

Sensory backpacks and ear defenders

We have brilliant sensory support backpacks you can borrow. They come with fiddle toys, ear defenders and a social story. You can book them before you visit. If you'd like to borrow ear defenders, you'll find them in the welcome area, Bio:Space, Science Theatre and Science Live.



D/deaf visitors

The Planetarium

Our fulldome film shows have subtitles. We'll let you know on our website and when you're booking which shows these are. There's also an induction loop system too. It requires the T setting. We'd love it if you could arrive 10 minutes before your show is due to start so that our team can test the microphone and find the best seat for you. We also have British Sign Language days with a friendly interpreter – check out our website for the special dates.

We are always working towards further improving our experience. Got a suggestion or can offer some support – just get in touch with our team.



Visitors with visual impairments

The Planetarium

We've got super 3D printed models and NASA's official tactile books. They're great when you're watching our live shows. We are always working towards further improving our experience. If you are joining us in the Planetarium, please let our staff know about your visual impairment. This will ensure they use they use more descriptive language.

Visitors with visual impairments

Exhibition floor and Science Theatre

The exhibition floor and Science Theatre can be challenging – especially when it's busy. We want to change this. We're currently fundraising to improve the experience for visitors with visual impairments. While we do this, please speak to our staff during your visit. We will happily explain any exhibits or assist you to make your visit easier.

Babies and pre-schoolers

All our exhibits are interactive and low down – perfect for little hands to be touchy-feely. On the lower floor, there's a soft play area for the little ones. We've even got ear defenders in our shows to protect sensitive ears.

We have baby changing areas and lift access between floors for pushchairs. If you want to explore when it's not so busy, visit us after 3pm. We are proud to be a breast-feeding friendly venue. Feed your baby wherever works for you both or if you would like somewhere private, just let us know. Got food or a bottle that needs heating up? Bring it to the Hub Café. There's highchairs here and at the Hut Café as well.



Toilets and Changing Places

There is an accessible toilet on both floors. Upstairs the toilet has a shower with a stool. The lower floor toilet can be found through the doors in Explorer:Space. If you get lost, just ask one of the team for directions.

On the lower floor we also have a special Changing Places facility. There's plenty of space for a wheelchair and two carers/personal assistants. It has a toilet, a height-adjustable changing table and an Openmed OT200 hoist with a two-point spreader bar for loop slings. The maximum weight is 200kg and if you need to use a sling, please bring your own.



Toilets and Changing Places

You can access the toilet with a radar key. If you don't have a radar key, just ask a member of staff – we're all here to help. The Changing Places facility is open 24 hours a day. When we are closed you can still access it through a door outside the building. You'll need special code from the Changing Places website and a radar key.



Cafés, picnic areas and Science Shop

The Hub Café and The Hut Café

You'll find the Hub Café on the upper level. It can be quite noisy on busy days. It's quieter in the Hut Café on the lower floor. You'll find lots of great snacks and drinks in there to suit a variety of dietary requirements. All the tables in the Hut Café area are round – perfect if you have a wheelchair or lip read. There are some round tables in the Hub Café too. You'll find a covered outdoor seating area by the Hub Café. That's also a quieter space. Both cafés have good natural light as well as additional overhead lighting. They are largely self-service, but we can help if you need it – just ask.



Cafés, picnic areas and Science Shop

Picnic areas

The Science Centre is the perfect place for a picnic. The main outside area is outside the doors in the Hub Café. There are steps and a short tarmacked ramp leading to picnic tables on a sloping grassy area. Don't worry if it rains, just head to the Hut Café and eat your picnic there.

Science Shop

You'll find the Science Shop on the way to the Planetarium, near to the exit. Floors here are level.

First aid

Need some first aid? No problem. Our first aid room is next to the accessible toilet on the upper level. We also have first aid kits around the building and you'll never be far from one of our trained first aiders. Just speak to the nearest staff member if you need help.

Plans for the future

We are on a mission. We want Winchester Science Centre to be a national beacon for accessibility in STEM. We want to be a benchmark for other science centres in promoting inclusivity in our sector. We've made huge leaps forward in this – but we're not there yet.

Our plan is to work with experts, people who live with disabilities and life-altering conditions, families of those people and carers. By working together we hope to achieve our goal. So we'd love to hear from you. If you can help us or would like to share your thoughts about how we can improve our experience, get in touch. We can't wait to hear from you.