

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

Why take part?

This is the third year that The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust has taken part in Takeover Day. The Trust has refined the programme over the years to give children a meaningful experience which focuses on their interests.

Who took part?

Two classes of Year 6 pupils (10-11 year olds) from a local primary school. The same school has been involved each year and has developed their work in school to support the event.

What did they do?

Half the children wore replica Tudor dress and the other half performed scenes from a Shakespearian play to visitors around the Birthplace. The 'Tudor' group took part in a carousel of work-related activities, rotating after a set time so they could experience all of them. One of the most successful of these was the handling collection in the exhibition room, where children helped visitors explore replica objects, described what they were and pointed out the real objects.

How did they spend their time on the day?

The children's Takeover Day experience took place over the course of a week. On Monday, the Primary School Liaison Officer went into school to set the scene and explained the different activities on offer. Children then chose which they wanted to do. Teachers themed much of their work for that week around different aspects of the Birthplace operations, building pupils' confidence and getting them ready for the day. On Wednesday, the children had a familiarisation visit to the Birthplace, including a guided tour, going behind the scenes and planning their Takeover Day tasks e.g. making posters and visitor leaflets to advertise the performances. On Friday, (Takeover Day) children:

- Performed for the public in various onsite locations
- Designed and collected surveys and sold tickets at Reception
- Catalogued and handled documents and displayed / demonstrated early printed books and artefacts
- Created a blog about their experiences
- Guided visitors in every room of the Birthplace and facilitated handling sessions for visitors of more than ten nationalities

What happened next?

After each year's event, the organisation listens to and acts upon the advice given by their Takeover Day participants e.g. where to position particular merchandise in the shop and other areas of the museum they want to take over. Positive outcomes included closer working between the Birthplace and the local community, as well as offering the school and the Birthplace a better understanding of what the other does. Parents of the children attending were given a free voucher to visit on that day and a very high proportion took up the offer. The Birthplace collected evidence to show a significant impact on visitor experience on the day.

'As a customer I was overwhelmed by the joy and excitement of seeing these children engage in history and literature and having the opportunity to engage in dialogue with real people. Their presence increased the pleasure of my excursion.'

There were two instances of children coming back with extended family and taking over independently, giving them a full guided tour of the Birthplace as they had done on Takeover Day. In one case, other visitors started to join in and ask questions. 2014 was an anniversary year for Shakespeare and eight of the Takeover Day children went to the Speakers' Apartments at the Houses of Parliament to give a flavour of Takeover Day and the birthday celebrations to MPs, including the Education Secretary.

'I love the Birthplace, I want to work here when I'm older. I can say I've had experience.' Takeover Day Participant